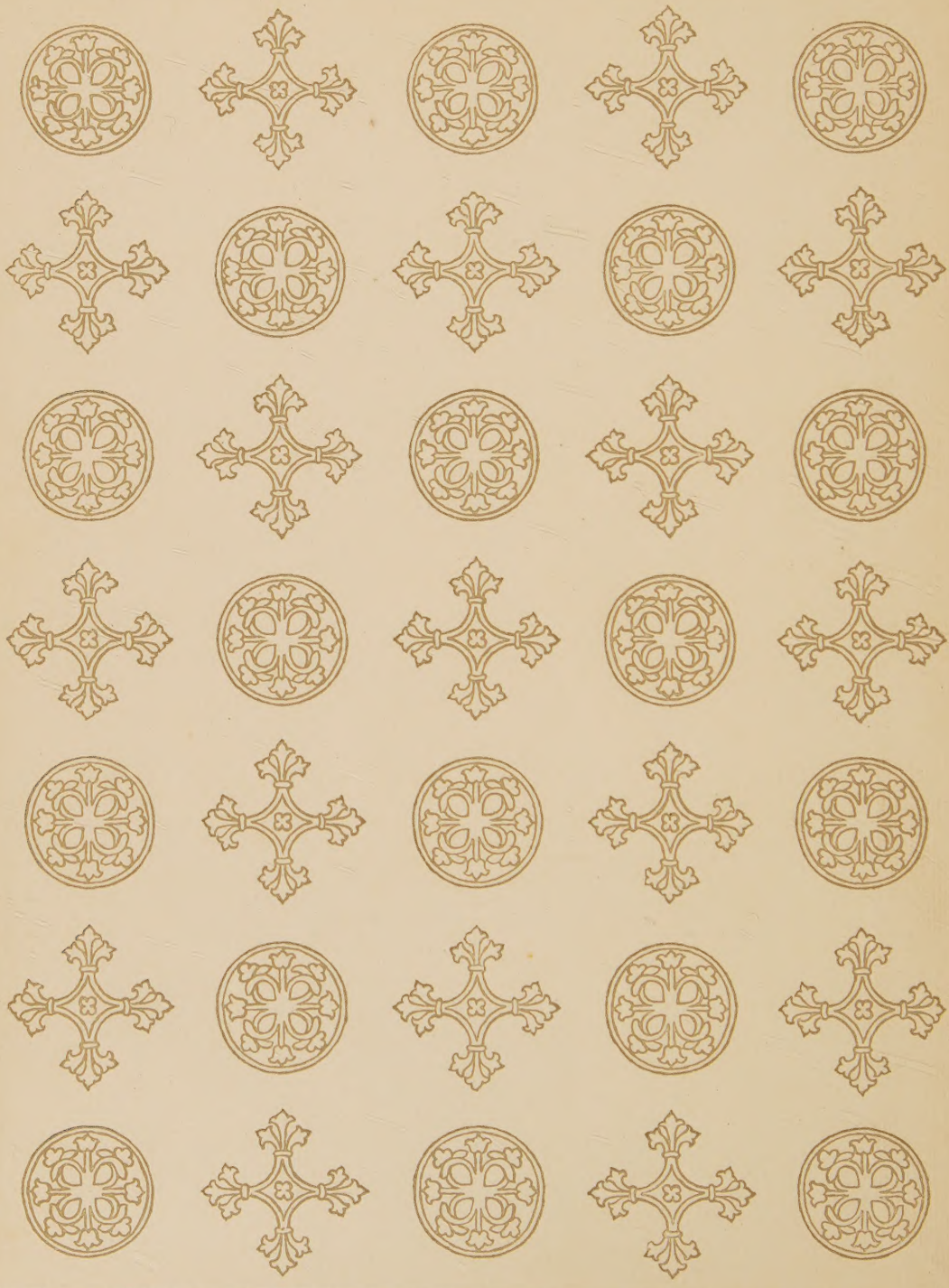
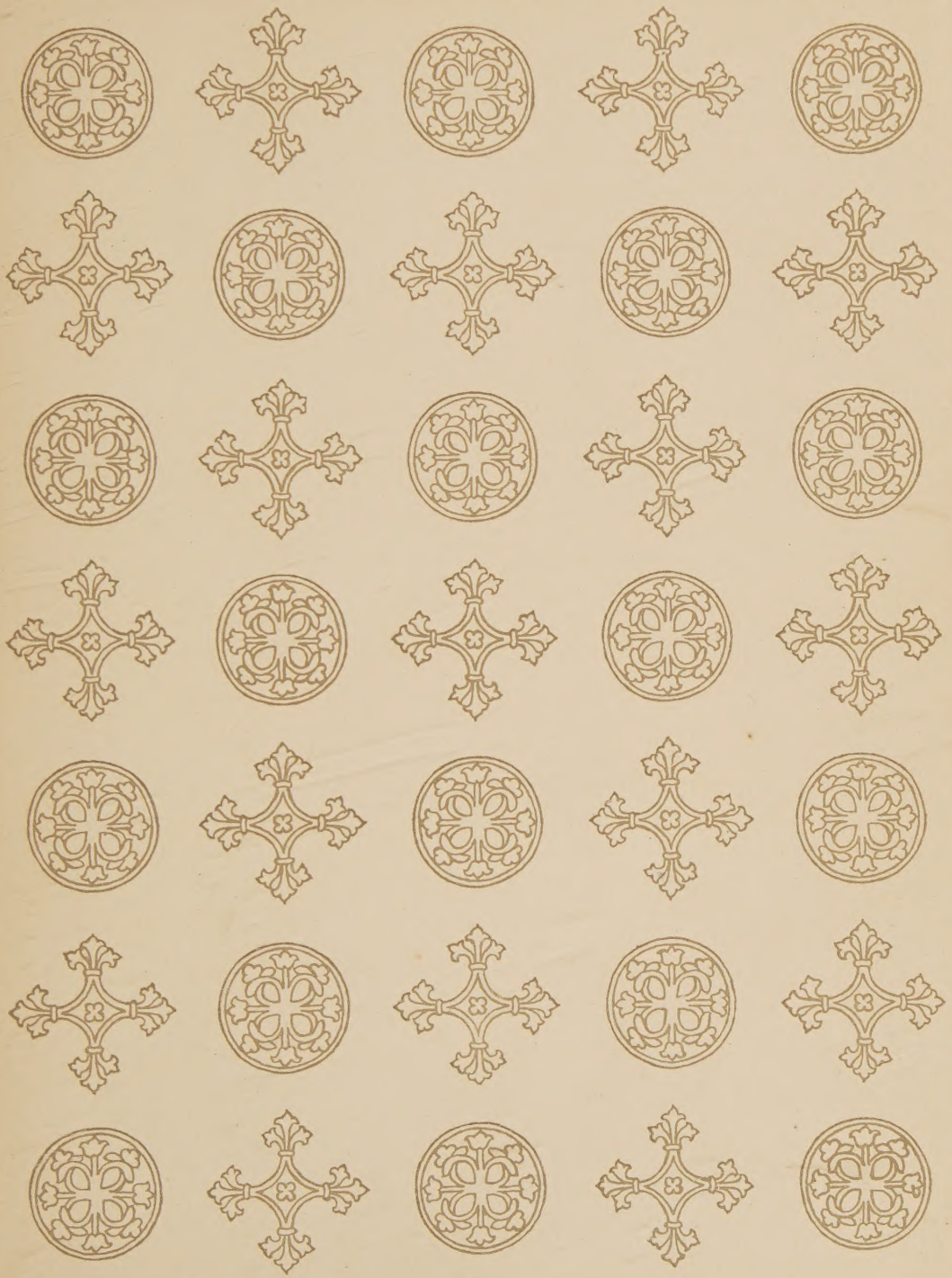
THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN

A LIFE OF CHRIST

BY

CLIFFORD HOWARD





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THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN

"In a manger close by, and wrapped in swaddling clothes, lay the child, asleep"

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THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN

(A LIFE OF CHRIST)

BY

CLIFFORD HOWARD

With a Foreword by
The Reverend Amory H. Bradford, D.D.

Illustrated by
W. L. Taylor and T. Guernsey Moore

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

¶ *THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN FIRST APPEARED IN "THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL." THE AUTHOR WISHES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE COURTESY OF THE EDITOR IN PERMITTING HIM TO REPUBLISH THE STORY IN ITS PRESENT FORM.*

¶ *MESSRS. L. C. PAGE & COMPANY WISH ALSO TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE COURTESY OF "THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL" BY WHICH THEY WERE ABLE TO ARRANGE FOR THE USE OF THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS.*

FOREWORD

THIS *Story of a Young Man fills an unoccupied place in current literature. The life of Jesus has been written from the point of view of the Jew and of the Gentile, of the scholar, the devotee and the theologian; it has been written to support some favorite doctrine; and again with the purpose of seeking the simple truth. For more than a thousand years it has been a subject of world-wide inquiry.*

¶ *So far as I know this differs from all other works of its kind. There has been one teacher in the sphere of ethics and religion whom all have agreed in recognizing as the most potential spiritual force which has ever appeared on this planet. Mr. Howard approaches this personage exactly as he would any other*

historic character, and asks, What were the incontestable facts in his career? Jesus of Nazareth, as he appeared when a child, a youth, a young man, bending beneath the consciousness of a mighty mission, is the subject of this story.

¶ *As it concerns only the humanity of Christ, the narrative rightly ends with his death. If any inquire why it does not go further, or why so little interpretation of act or teaching is offered, it is sufficient to answer that the author has endeavored to place the more conspicuous facts and characteristics of this life in such clear relief that they will speak their own message and be their own interpretation.*

¶ *It has been my privilege to examine this story in manuscript, and I can assure those who may wish to read it that it is accurate in its statements, vivid and picturesque in its style, free from cant, and entirely reverent and earnest in spirit. This story*

brings back again the conditions in which Jesus dwelt, causes ancient events to be reacted before our eyes, and with vividness makes us see and love the young man as if he were living still, and in our time were going about doing good.

AMORY H. BRADFORD

Pastor of the First Congregational Church of Montclair, New Jersey

EXPLANATION

"THE Story of a Young Man" is the story of Jesus of Nazareth. It is not a life of Christ, in the usual meaning of that term. While it is founded solely upon Scriptural records, it makes no pretense of embodying all that is contained in the Gospels. The purpose of the story, as its title indicates, is to portray Jesus as the man; to view him in the light of his humanity; and, while never overlooking his divinity, to set forth his earthly career in the form of a narrative recording the growth, the struggles, the achievements of a fellow being — the greatest ever on earth, yet a fellow-being.

¶ *Such of the events of his life as are introduced have been chosen with a view to illustrate his character from this standpoint: to emphasize his wondrous personality as a man, and at the same time*

to carry forward the story in the progressive form of an unfolding narrative. To have recited all of the incidents connected with the life of the Saviour would have given to the story a comprehensiveness and a redundancy of illustration quite out of keeping with the object in view. Yet, notwithstanding the necessary omission of much that is related in the Gospels, it is not believed that any representative feature of the life of Christ has been overlooked.

¶ *To consistently carry out its design the story is brought to a close with the death of Jesus. The crucifixion marks the completion of the mortal part of his existence: the fulfillment of his life as a man.*

¶ *It has been deemed advisable to offer the foregoing explanation, in order that all who read The Story of a Young Man may do so with a proper understanding of its purpose and its character.*

THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER ONE

THE broad, open court of the village inn was a scene of noisy confusion. Men, women and children, preparing for their night's rest, moved hither and thither among the packs and bundles that lay strewn upon the ground. Belated travelers, some of them still seated upon their beasts, looked about anxiously for some possible means of accommodation at the already overcrowded inn. A babel of many sounds and voices rose upon the evening air. The yelps of dogs mingled with the grunting of camels and the braying of restless donkeys. Men were talking together in groups; others were loudly calling to one another or giving commands. Servants hurried back and forth, jostling and pushing, while impatient hostlers shouted at their tired animals

as they drove them into the stalls that were ranged about the three sides of the courtyard.

¶ A little apart from the throng, and half concealed in the shadow of a sheltering nook, was a young woman seated upon a donkey. She was dressed in the simple garb of a Jewish peasant. A robe of homespun material covered her girlish figure, while a light wimple encircled her head and neck, and served both as a cover and a veil.

¶ She had chosen this secluded spot to await the return of her fellow-traveler, who had hurried forward in the hope of securing accommodations for the night.

¶ She was evidently a stranger, for she spoke to no one, and those passing near went by without heeding her, except, perhaps, to notice that she leaned forward wearily on her pillion as one exhausted with a long journey, and that the beauty of her gentle face was softened with the touch-

ing sadness that comes of patient and silent suffering.

¶ Close by three or four men were conversing in earnest tones. She appeared neither to hear them nor to be aware of their presence. Her soft blue eyes, filled with the tender light of purity, gazed off wistfully into the depths of heaven, where the first stars of night were already dimly twinkling. Her thoughts were not of the scenes nor of the people about her. Was she simply dreaming of her far-off home amid the hills of Galilee, or was her soul filled with thoughts of vaster and of deeper import, thoughts that drew her near to God in solemn reverie?

¶ Suddenly she became conscious of the words that were being spoken by one of the men in the little group near by:

¶ "Nay nay; speak not thus doubtingly, my son. The time of his coming is already fulfilled as spoken by the Prophets. Yet a little while and

the Redeemer of Israel will appear and avenge the sufferings of his people.

¶ "Let us bear patiently our tribulations, and let not your faith nor your courage fail you. Be strong, and fear not; for the day of salvation is at hand. Yea, from this very place, this town of Bethlehem, the city of David, will he come forth—the Prince, the Messiah; and his kingdom shall triumph over all the kingdoms of the world.

¶ "Long and diligently have I studied the Prophets and the signs, and I say unto you that the hour is come when Israel may lift up her voice and cry with a joyous heart, 'Behold, the words of Isaiah are fulfilled; the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the world is born!'"

¶ The young woman clasped her hands in an ecstasy of silent emotion. Her lips moved as though repeating the words she had just heard. Then a faint flush mounted her pale cheeks, and

with a smile of wondrous joy, illuming her countenance as with a radiance of divine glory, she lifted her eyes to heaven in soulful adoration and was again lost in reverie. She was aroused by the gentle touch of a hand and the voice of a man tenderly calling "Mary!"

¶ With a smile of loving recognition she answered softly, "Joseph!"

¶ "It is as they told us," said the man, speaking slowly; "there is no room. I have searched through the town. Every house is filled, and those of whom I asked a share of their lodgement turned upon me a deaf ear. I care not for myself; it is for you, Mary. The night is cold, and you are faint, for we have traveled far. But, God be praised! you shall not want for shelter. A stable on yonder side of the inn awaits us. It will serve till the morrow. It is better than the open night. See, the keeper approaches! He will show us the way."

¶ With his strong arms he lifted her from her seat, and together they walked across the crowded courtyard, the keeper leading the way with the donkey.

¶ The stable proved to be no more than a cave — a natural recess in the side of a hill, roughly fitted up for the accommodation of cattle. The drowsy occupants of the place turned their large brown eyes inquiringly upon the intruders, who groped their way by the fitful light of a rude lantern to the farther end of the room.

¶ To both husband and wife the journey from their home in Nazareth had been one of many trials and hardships. They had come, not of their own accord, but in obedience to the mandates of a hated law, that rankled deep in the hearts of an oppressed and downtrodden nation, requiring all Jews to be enrolled, that they might be taxed for the support of their Roman — their heathen — masters. Mary and Joseph were both of the

house of David, and were therefore obliged to register at Bethlehem, the home of their royal ancestor, in accordance with a provision of the law that each person must be enrolled at his family town.

¶ They were poor and unaccustomed to traveling, and the bleak, chilling winds and frequent rains of the winter season added to the trials and discomforts of their slow-plodding journey of several days across the dreary plains and mountains. Joseph had traversed the entire distance on foot; while Mary, too, ofttimes obliged to dismount, because of dangerous or impassable roads, had walked many miles through rain-sodden valleys and over the steep and rugged passes of the Judean hills.

¶ And now, arrived at their journey's end, faint, footsore and disheartened, they found themselves alone — without friends, strangers in a strange place. No kindly voice to greet them;

no one to bid them welcome. No familiar face, no landmark to cheer their drooping hearts, and nowhere to rest their weary bodies save with the beasts of the field upon the floor of a dark and cheerless stable.

¶ What wonder that the young and gentle wife, yielding at last to fatigue and physical suffering, and overcome with a sense of her desolation in the hour of life's greatest trial, sank upon her meagre bed of straw, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed as a child — with none to offer comfort, save him who sat beside her in helpless sympathy.

¶ Gradually the courtyard became quiet. The uproar and commotion ceased. The weary travelers and wayfarers stretched themselves upon their pallets beneath the roof that extended along the northern end of the inclosure and formed the sleeping-quarters of the inn.

¶ The stormful clouds that had hung low and threateningly over the hills drifted apart and melted slowly away into the deep cerulean of night; and out of the darkness came the stars, the immortelles of Hope, blossoming in the fields of heaven.

¶ The wintry wind that all day long had swept in violent gusts across the mountain ridge now died away, and in its place there came a breath of gentle warmth, bringing with it the dreams of flowers and of music.

¶ No sound disturbed the tranquil night save ever and anon a far-off shepherd's call across the hills. A solemn stillness, a spirit of celestial harmony, now breathed upon the dark immensity of night. Then over all there came a wondrous peace, a sense of infinite repose, filling the heavens as with a breath from Paradise. And, lo! the sorrowing and expectant world slept on and heeded not.

¶ The first faint traces of the coming dawn were softly stealing above the shadowy hills when the voices of men were heard, hurrying by and speaking in anxious tones:

¶ "Where is the cave? Show us the place! Aye, yonder it is! Come, let us hasten, that we may find him!"

¶ Then they passed out of hearing, and those who were awakened from their slumbers fell back to sleep thinking that they had but dreamed.

¶ But with the dawn of the day the voices came again — this time animated, exultant, as in the announcement of great and joyful news. They were the voices of shepherds, and the men and women who were now astir, preparing for travel or going about their daily occupations, beheld in their midst four or five of these lowly herdsmen — men of rude and unkempt appearance, armed with heavy crooks

A SHEPHERD

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and clad in sheepskins that hung loosely from their shoulders and were girded at the waist with a broad belt, leaving the arms and legs unprotected.

¶ But though crude of speech and manner, these men were of gentle heart, for their calling was one of tenderness and care, and their souls — knowing little of the world — were filled with the poetry of Nature ; with the music and the sunshine of the fields, that drew them ever close to God in confident communion.

¶ And now as they spoke, addressing the curious and inquisitive throng that gathered about them, their heartfelt emotion, their simple, trustful joy inspired their tongues with an eloquence that thrilled the hearts of their hearers with wondering awe.

¶ "Behold, as on the hills of Bethlehem we watched our flocks, suddenly there shone within the heavens a great and wondrous light — a

light as of the glory of the Lord; and, lo! an angel came and stood before us.

¶ "Then were we sore afraid, and hid in terror, knowing not the portent of this marvel. But hark! the angel spoke to us and bade us have no fear; and, lo! his words, his tidings, were of wondrous joy — 'Behold, the Saviour, Christ the Lord, this day is born.'

¶ "And, lo! that we might have a sign whereby to seek the new-born King, the angel spoke again to us and said that we should find him wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger in the town of Bethlehem.

¶ "Then, behold, the heavens opened and we saw the heavenly host, a multitude of angels; and all the firmament was filled with music and with voices praising God.

¶ "Then quickly we made haste and came to Bethlehem. And there, in yonder stable, we beheld the new-born child lying in a manger, as

was spoken by the angel of the Lord. And by this sign we knew that he was Christ, the King, and straightway did we worship him."

¶ The marvelous story of the shepherds quickly spread. Men and women discussed it eagerly and earnestly. Some of the more curious visited the cave. It was true; a child had been born there during the night. But whose child was it? To what family of Israel did it belong? No one appeared to know. The mother was a stranger, a peasant from Nazareth.

¶ Then doubts arose. Many questioned the reality of the shepherds' vision upon the hills. "They are but dreamers. Why did not we hear and see these wondrous things? Is it thus a king is born—in a stable, in a manger? The child is as any other child! No, no; the Messiah, the King of Israel, will come as a Prince, in the splendor of the royal house of David, and in the might and the glory of the Lord!"

¶ Then they smiled at the momentary credulity that had entered their hearts, and they mocked those who were still inclined to believe; and ere long the subject ceased to be discussed, and the story was dismissed as an idle tale.

¶ Within the cave, now dimly lighted with the morning sun, the mother lay sleeping upon her pallet of straw. All trace of pain, all sign of suffering, was gone. A faint smile hovered about her gentle lips, imparting to her fair, young face a beauty that was more than mortal. Her bosom rose and fell in peaceful slumber. Her trials, her sorrows were forgotten. She slept the dreamless sleep of perfect joy—the joy of motherhood.

¶ In a manger close by, and wrapped in swaddling clothes, lay the child, asleep.

¶ The husband stood near. With an expression that spoke of mingled wonder and reverence he looked upon the slumbering infant; and then,

letting his gaze rest upon her who lay sleeping at his feet, his eyes filled with tears—tears of tender sympathy and love—as he murmured, "Mary!"

CHAPTER TWO

IT was a bright morning in the early springtime. The fields were green with sprouting wheat and barley, and the verdant meadowlands sparkled with dew. Wild flowers hedged the paths and roadways, and the scent of blossoms filled the air. Upon the mountains the oak and the hawthorn were putting forth their tender leaves, and the silvery foliage of the olive mingled with the pink of the almond and the peach, while leafing vineyards spread their mantles of delicate green upon the terraced hills.

¶ It was amid these scenes of awakened life — so different from those that had surrounded them on their way from Nazareth six weeks before — that Joseph and Mary journeyed slowly for-

ward on the road that lay between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The way was short — not more than five or six miles — but they had started at sunrise, in order that they might reach the city and the Temple at an early hour.

¶ To Mary the day was one of sacred import. Not only was she about to receive the holy rite of purification as a mother, but her child, her son, her first-born, was on this day to be presented to the Lord. According to the custom of her people she had been obliged to wait forty days after the birth of her child before undertaking this momentous errand. And now, the period of seclusion having expired, she and her loving companion were wending their way toward the Temple with proud and happy hearts.

¶ She rode upon an ox, for it was the custom of women to travel thus when on their way to the Holy City to be purified. Joseph walked quietly by her side, now and again looking up

with a loving smile, or pointing out to her some place of interest.

¶ Pressed close to her bosom she carried her sleeping child in her arms.

¶ "Jesus!"

¶ She spoke the name to herself many times in the tender fervency of a mother's love. And now, as she repeated it and gazed down at the little face nestled so close to her own, a glorious vision rose in memory before her.

¶ She is at her home, in Nazareth; and as she sits alone dreamily spinning, an angel appears before her, and, in a voice sweet with the music of heaven, tells her of the joy and of the glory that the Lord has ordained for her. She, above all women, has been chosen by the Most High for the fulfillment of His promise to the children of Israel. Yea, even she, a virgin, shall conceive through the power of the Holy Ghost, and shall bring into the world the Messiah, Christ, the

Saviour of Mankind — the Son of God. And his name shall be called Jesus, and he shall reign over the world, and his kingdom shall endure forever.

¶ Oft had she repeated to herself the sacred and cherished words that were spoken to her in this divine annunciation at Nazareth; and now again they rose to her lips as she gazed from the helpless infant at her breast to the shining walls of the Temple of Jerusalem looming before her in the splendor of the morning sun.

¶ Then a look of pensive wondering, a vague, half-conscious questioning, stole into the depths of her trustful eyes, and a momentary shadow dimmed the sunshine of her joyous countenance.

¶ She thought of the shepherds. They had come; they knew it was he. But the others — the people of Bethlehem — why had not they recognized him? When would the world know? When would it welcome him?

¶ Entering the city and passing through the narrow, winding streets, Joseph and Mary arrived ere long before the gates of the great Temple.

¶ In company with other women who had come on a similar errand Mary tremblingly approached the sacred court of the Israelites, overawed by the grandeur and solemnity about her; and there, offering up her humble sacrifice of two doves, she was duly declared purified according to the law.

¶ With the happy and unaffected pride of motherhood she now brought forward her child, the infant Jesus, and together she and Joseph devoutly presented him to the priests for redemption, in accordance with a religious ordinance requiring the payment of a sum of money and the performance of certain rites as a means of redeeming or releasing a first-born child from the service of the Lord, for according to an an-

cient law the first-born son of every mother belonged of right to God or the priesthood.

¶ Their duties fulfilled, Mary and Joseph turned to go, that they might return to Bethlehem while the day was yet cool. It was still morning, and crowds of men and women were passing in and out of the Temple courts, going to and returning from their devotions.

¶ In the devout and simple earnestness of her soul, Mary felt that her child had been given to her anew, and as she prepared to pass out amid the throng she held him in close and affectionate embrace—her son, her Jesus!

¶ Had any one noticed him? Did any one know? Alas! with quivering lips the innocent, sensitive mother told herself that no one had heeded his presence; that no one knew him. No, not even the priests, the servants of God, who had blessed him.

¶ Suddenly she heard a voice calling her. It was

that of an old man, who came forward with tottering steps, holding out his arms toward the child.

¶ "Praise be to God!" he cried. "It is he; it is he! Lo! these many years have I waited that I might behold the consolation of Israel; for was it not revealed to me that I, Simeon, should not see death until I had seen the Lord's Christ?"

¶ Then, taking the child in his trembling arms, he lifted up his voice in a fervent prayer of thanksgiving. The consolation of Israel had come. His eyes had beheld the Christ, the light to the Gentiles, and he who through faith had waited patiently all these weary years was ready now to die; to give up the burden of life and depart in peace.

¶ His feeble voice, tremulous with emotion, faltered and broke. Tears filled his dim-lit eyes; and bowing his head upon his chest he stood for several moments silent — speechless; while into

his aged face, now half concealed beneath the long white locks that clustered about it, there came a light of celestial happiness — the dawning light of the life to come.

¶ Returning the infant to Mary he blessed her and her husband, and spoke with prophetic inspiration of her child and of herself, and to the wondering mother his words were filled with strange, half-fearful meaning. The child would be the cause of the rising and the falling of many in Israel, and many would be against him, and she, too, would suffer.

¶ As he finished speaking a feeble, white-haired woman, bent and wrinkled with the burden of years, approached the little group. She seemed well known at the Temple, for all who passed her addressed her reverently as "Anna." She had heard the words of Simeon and had come forward timidly that she might look upon the infant.

¶ Earnestly she gazed upon the peaceful, innocent face, and then, as if a glorious revelation had burst upon her soul, she turned her eyes to heaven with a look of ineffable peace, and in simple, heartfelt words gave thanks to God that she had been spared to see this day.

CHAPTER THREE

THE evening shadows had fallen over the town of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were seated in their humble dwelling, with the infant Jesus sleeping peacefully on the mother's bosom. The cavern stable that had served them as a shelter upon their arrival at the over-crowded town had been abandoned soon afterward for lodgings in one of the smaller houses of Bethlehem, where Mary might await in comfort the time of her purification; and it was in the twilight quietude of this temporary home that the little family of Galilee were now gathered.

¶ It was the evening of their return from Jerusalem. In the gathering darkness, through which the light of a candle shed its fickle rays, Mary and Joseph sat together and talked —

talked of him, their child. They were rehearsing the words of Simeon and Anna. The incident at the Temple had wonderfully impressed them, and their hearts were full of emotion as they discussed the prophecies spoken by the inspired patriarch.

¶ As they talked they became aware of the sound of approaching footsteps and voices. Along the stony pathway that did service as a street, a cavalcade appeared to be drawing near. With increasing stir it advanced toward the house, until at length the flare of torches and the tramp of many feet, mingled with a clamorous babel of tongues, aroused Joseph and Mary from their thoughts.

¶ Before Joseph could reach the door to ascertain the cause of so unusual a disturbance, they heard voices speaking at the threshold.

¶ "See, is not this the place?"

¶ "It is even so. Let us enter."

A WISE MAN

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¶ And a moment later three men entered the room, while the crowd of men and boys that had followed them gazed through the open doorway.

¶ They were strangers, foreigners, dressed in a fashion unknown to either Mary or Joseph. But by the richness of their apparel and their courtly bearing it was evident they were persons of wealth and station.

¶ But why had they come to this poor and lowly place? What had brought them here? The husband and wife drew back in consternation; but in a moment their doubts were set at rest by the kindly salutation of the visitors.

¶ "Fear not. Peace and joy be unto you. We come seeking him who is born King of the Jews; for we have seen his star, the star of the Messiah, the Redeemer. It has risen in the East, as was spoken by the prophets of old, and, lo! it has been to us a sign and a guide."

¶ Then perceiving the child as he lay in Mary's lap, they came forward reverently, and falling on their knees they worshipped him, and placed before him the offerings they had brought — caskets of gold, of frankincense and myrrh — gifts such as men offered to princes, to kings.

¶ Then rising, and blessing the husband and wife, they took their departure as suddenly as they had come.

¶ Mary and Joseph looked at one another in bewilderment. Was it a vision? Had they but dreamed? No, the precious gifts were still there, and curious neighbors hastening in inquired eagerly concerning the strange visitors; for were they not Magi — wise men of the East — and had they not entered the town asking for an infant king?

¶ Overwhelmed with wonder at what had occurred, and unable at first to grasp its full import, it was not until she was again alone with

her husband and her child that Mary awoke to a realization of its glorious significance.

¶ The angel of Nazareth seemed to speak again. The words of the annunciation filled her soul with their rapturous music.

¶ Behold, was it not true? Why had her heart ever doubted, ever questioned? And as she fell asleep that night her soul was radiant with happiness and hope, and her dreams were filled with visions of glory and of joys without number.

¶ Suddenly her dreams vanished. She was awake, and about her was the blackness of night. Joseph was calling her:

¶ "Make haste!" he exclaimed. "Take the child, and let us fly; for Herod, the King, seeks to destroy him! Yea, the Lord has spoken to me in a dream. Come, let us depart at once lest it be too late. We must leave Bethlehem — aye, even Judea and the land of Palestine — and flee

into Egypt, that we may be safe from the wrath of the King."

¶ With fast-beating heart, and spurred by a wild terror of impending danger, Mary hastily prepared for their sudden departure; her dreams, her happiness, her hopes, all forgotten in this moment of peril. She did not stop to reason nor to ask the meaning of the calamity that so suddenly threatened to befall them. She only knew that her child was in danger; that some malevolent fate was seeking to take him from her.

¶ Not for a moment did she question the truth of the dream as a warning from God; but with mingled emotions of thankfulness and fear she gathered her precious one to her heart and stole forth with her husband into the dark reality of night, away from the sunshine and the music of her soul's happy reverie.

¶ The stars were still shining, and no sound disturbed the slumbering town as the fugitives

passed through the gate of Bethlehem out into the darkness of the world, alone, unheeded and unpitied, save by the Father who watched over them and guided their trembling footsteps.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE glory of a summer's day shone upon the town of Nazareth — the beautiful City of the Rose, nestled among the sheltering hills of Galilee. It was the month of April, the time of the Passover, and the town was astir with the busy preparations of those who were about to depart on their annual journey to Jerusalem to attend the great national festival.

¶ Among the many yearly feasts celebrated by the Jews there was none that appealed more strongly to the national spirit than that of the Passover, the celebration of the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Not only did it commemorate one of the most momentous epochs in the history of the race, but to the hearts of many it had now another and prophe-

tic significance — the salvation of Israel by the promised and long-expected Messiah.

Of the multitude whose thoughts and whose steps turned toward Jerusalem there was one household in the little town of Nazareth to whom the occasion was of more than ordinary interest. To the family of Joseph, the carpenter, and his wife and boy, the feast this year meant more than to all the other worshippers of Palestine. Jesus was going with his parents to Jerusalem. He had reached the age that permitted him to attend the festival; and in the devout and humble life of the little family this first journey of the boy to the Feast of the Passover was an event of surpassing moment.

Twelve years had passed since Joseph and Mary, with their precious charge, had returned from their refuge in Egypt, whither they had fled to escape the murderous jealousy of King Herod. But the King having died soon after

"The Child Jesus had grown to boyhood, fulfilling the fondest hopes of his parents"

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their flight from Bethlehem, they had ventured to return to their native town after a sojourn of but a short while in the strange land of the Nile. And here, amid the lowly and humble surroundings of the carpenter's home, and under the tender care of his devoted mother, the child Jesus had grown to boyhood, fulfilling the fondest hopes of his parents in his unvarying goodness and in his dutiful, loving obedience.

¶ He had now come of age, according to the Jewish custom, and was for the first time entitled to take part in the great festival of which he had so often heard. Passing from childhood's realm of home and school, he was about to enter the world to exercise the duties and privileges of a "Bar Mizvah," or "son of the commandment."

¶ To Mary and Joseph the occasion was one of unmingled happiness, fraught with glowing promises of the future; and it was with glad and

thankful hearts that they set forth for Jerusalem accompanied by their son. He was now a member of the congregation — their boy, their Jesus; the light and the joy of their lives.

¶ To the boy himself it was the realization of an ideal. In common with all Jewish children, his training from early infancy had been imbued with religion. His first knowledge was of God, the Father. It was of Him that the mother spoke and sang to the child while yet she carried him in her arms. The stories to which he listened at her knee were the stories of Jehovah's love and mercy. From his baby days he had seen on the doorpost of the house a little metal cylinder, the Mesusah, with the name of the Most High inscribed upon it, and had noticed that every one who came or went touched the sacred name with his finger, and then kissed the finger and repeated a short prayer. The conversation in the household, while he sat at meals with his par-

ents or assisted them in their daily work, was of the Father, and of the mighty deeds of the great men of Israel, and at school the Scriptures formed the subject of all his lessons.

¶ Of a gentle, sensitive nature, his childish heart responded in unquestioning reverence to these holy influences of his daily life. His love for the Father — a love instilled at his mother's breast — grew ever stronger and more earnest with the unfolding of his devout nature. It was the thought that he was now one of the Father's congregation — that he was entitled to take part in the devotions that would bring him into closer communion with God — that appealed most strongly to the boy and filled his soul with a joyful enthusiasm, as on this bright summer's day he took his place with Joseph and Mary in the company that was leaving Nazareth to attend the Passover.

¶ As he passed down the narrow, rugged path

from the mountain village, and out upon the great plain below, his heart bounded with boyish delight. It was his first journey from home, his first sight of the world, and all Nature seemed to rejoice with him and to be in harmony with his joyous spirit.

¶ The earth was aglow with its richest blossoms, decking the green-mantled hills and plains with a wild profusion of color, and filling the soft, warm air with a dreamy perfume. Fields of ripening grain rippled in the gentle summer breeze, and the vineyards and the orchards upon the hillside lent their delicate and varied tints of foliage and fruit to the rich coloring of the landscape, while from the trees and hedges and across the fields and from the deep blue of heaven came the warble and the song of birds, flooding the air with a melody of gladness.

¶ The flowers, the trees, the birds were to the boy as friends in a strange place. He knew them

all. They were the same as those in the gardens and fields at home, and he greeted them in happy surprise as he beheld them on every hand amid the new and unfamiliar scenes through which he was passing.

¶ Like all children of Galilee the greater part of his daily life was spent in the open air, among the glories of Nature, where he had learned to know and to love the works of the Creator. In the delightful, semi-tropical climate of Palestine there was but little need for the shelter of a roof during the greater part of the year, and the dwellings of the poor and humbler classes were accordingly of the simplest and most primitive style.

¶ Many of the houses in the towns and villages through which the travelers passed were similar to those of Nazareth — small, square, one-story buildings, covered with flat roofs, which were reached by flights of steps on the outside. Each

dwelling consisted of one room, the open doorway of which was the only source of light and air, for there were no windows; and this one room was made to serve for all the purposes of domestic life.

¶ Joseph's house was one of this kind, for Joseph was a man of but few possessions, depending for his daily bread upon the small and uncertain income of his humble trade. And it was in such a home as this, devoid of all luxuries and offering only the bare comforts of life, that Jesus was brought up; inured to privations, and taught from early childhood the necessity of labor and self-sacrifice.

¶ Over hills and through valleys, and along the banks of the beautiful and historic Jordan, the pilgrims from Nazareth slowly wended their way toward Jerusalem, resting at night by the roadside under booths of mats or leafy branches, and starting forward again at sunrise.

A CAMEL DRIVER

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¶ They joined themselves with other parties on the way, until there was a great concourse journeying on together, some riding on camels, and others on mules or horses, but the great majority traveling afoot; while here and there, accompanying the procession, were sun-browned shepherds with their flocks of lambs or goats destined for the sacrificial feast.

¶ On the fourth day they came in sight of the Holy City, shining white in the sunlight on its sacred hills. With one accord the pilgrims raised their voices in a glad shout of hosanna; and as they passed down through the outlying gardens and orchards they joined together in the singing of a familiar psalm, and approached the gates of the city amid the inspiring chorus of thousands of voices and the sweet-toned music of the flute-players, who were always to be found in a company of travelers.

¶ An enormous throng pressed through the gates

and filled the narrow streets. Companies and caravans had been arriving for days, and the city swarmed with a vast multitude of worshipers from all parts of the country and the world; while thousands of pilgrims, unable to find accommodations within the walls of the city itself, camped upon the surrounding slopes.

¶ The Feast of the Passover lasted a week, and the travelers from Nazareth arrived in ample time to prepare for the celebration of the Paschal supper, which was eaten on the night preceding the opening day of the festival. At this supper from ten to twenty persons sat down together as one family and ate of a roasted lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened cakes, in remembrance of the night, fifteen hundred years before, when the Children of Israel partook of a similar meal on the eve of their flight from the land of bondage; that fateful night when the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the

Israelites and slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, because of Pharaoh's refusal to set free the chosen people of God.

¶ Jerusalem, the Holy City, the great metropolis of Palestine, with its life and turmoil, its grandeur, its multitude of people and its historic associations would at any time have proved a revelation and a source of wonder to a simple country lad beholding it for the first time; but at the present season, when its population was swelled to many times its usual size, and a spirit of festive, religious enthusiasm pervaded the air, it could not but have inspired an intense interest on the part of a boy like Jesus, devout and impressionable, who from early childhood had heard of the greatness and the glory of the Holy City and had longed for the time to come when he might set foot within its sacred precincts.

¶ All through the days and nights of the festival his interest in the scenes and incidents about

him never flagged, but with every hour his emotions, his impressions grew stronger and more vivid. A subdued excitement pervaded his being. It was all so strange, so wonderful, so different from anything he had ever seen or experienced in the quiet village home in far-away Galilee; and as he passed along the crowded streets with their busy shops and stalls, and mingled with the vast throngs of people, representing all nations of the earth and all degrees and conditions of humanity, his mind was absorbed in constant wonder and delight.

¶ But of the many sights and objects that claimed his attention there was one that took precedence over all others; one spot toward which his thoughts and his steps constantly turned with deepest interest and reverence—the Temple, the house of God.

¶ This grand edifice, the chief feature and glory of Jerusalem and the center of the nation's

hopes and affections, stood upon a hill that rose abruptly from the city like an island in the midst of a sea of streets, walls, palaces and houses, and crowned by a mass of snow-white marble and glittering gold, rising terrace upon terrace in a ccession of courts, each surrounded by a wall id connected one with the other by a broad ght of steps; the whole forming a magnificent id imposing pile that gleamed and sparkled in e sun in dazzling splendor.

It was here, in the sanctuary of the Father, at the boy found his greatest pleasure. The auties and the grandeur of the building, the pressive ceremonies, the never-ending stream worshipers coming and going, and, above all, e sublime sanctity of the place, appealed with singular force to the boy of Nazareth, and aroused in him a sense of mingled awe and enthusiasm.

During the Passover week the Temple San-

hedrin—an ecclesiastical tribunal composed of rabbis, or doctors of the Law—assembled daily in one of the courts of the Temple and there held informal discourse with the public. The listeners sat upon the floor, ranging themselves in a semicircle about the doctors, and any one was permitted to make remarks or ask questions.

¶ Theological discussions were always popular with the Jews, and no one claimed greater respect than a rabbi—one whose knowledge of the Law and the Scriptures entitled him to instruct others in those matters which were ever nearest to the hearts of the people; for nowhere were religion and every-day life so closely interwoven as among the Jews.

¶ It may readily be imagined, therefore, that these gatherings in the Temple claimed the special attention of Jesus, and that he listened with eager heart and mind to the words of the learned rabbis. Although in years he was scarcely more

than a child, yet his pious, earnest nature endowed him with a maturity of thought beyond that usually found in boys of his age.

¶ The homely discourses among the neighbors in Nazareth, the lessons in the synagogue, and the simple theology and teachings of his parents, together with the subtle influence of Nature's gentle spirit, had all left their impress on his thoughtful mind and imbued him with a religion of pure and lofty ideals, while at the same time they had awakened in his heart a longing for a deeper knowledge of God—for an understanding of many of the mysteries of life and being, upon which he ofttimes pondered in childish meditation.

CHAPTER FIVE

AS the principal religious services of the Passover occupied but two days it was not necessary for pilgrims to remain in Jerusalem after that time, and consequently there were many who returned home before the expiration of the full period. Mary and Joseph, with a number of friends and relatives who had come with them from Nazareth, were among those who availed themselves of this privilege, and they started on their homeward journey about the fourth day.

In the tremendous crowds that choked the streets and filled the roads leading out of Jerusalem, and amid the confusion and excitement attending the simultaneous departure of thousands of persons in the darkness of the early morning, it was next to impossible for mem-

bers of a company to remain together. In the pushing, jostling and general uproar they frequently became separated, and it was only when the multitude got some distance beyond the city and began to disperse that any attempt was made to unite again according to companies or parties.

¶ When, therefore, Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not with them it did not cause them any special uneasiness, for they were assured that he was with other members of the company somewhere on the road. But when at the end of the first day's journey they pitched their little tent and prepared the evening repast they supposed, of course, he would rejoin them. But time passed, and he did not come.

¶ Thinking that he might perhaps be tarrying with some of the relatives, they inquired for him among the other members of the family. He was not with any of them.

¶ Anxiously now the parents looked for him in the neighboring booths and tents, but he was nowhere to be seen. Surely, some one could tell them where he was. They asked of their fellow-travelers and of every one they saw; but no one remembered having seen the boy.

¶ Filled with anxiety and growing alarm, the parents spent a wakeful night, striving in vain to allay the apprehensions that crowded upon their thoughts. And when morning came and there was still no news of him they waited no longer; there was now but one answer to their questioning fears — their child had been left in Jerusalem. They must return at once; every moment was precious. Even now it might be too late; and leaving the company to proceed on its way, they hastened back toward the city, impelled by the wildest fears and forebodings.

¶ It was dark when they reached the city. They had scanned with earnest gaze every company,

every family they had met on the road during the anxious, long day's journey. They had stopped and spoken to many concerning their boy. They had inquired at every wayside house, and had searched amid the pilgrim camps outside the city walls. But all in vain. Now darkness had come and they could do nothing more until the morning. And then, where should they look, how were they to find him, amid the labyrinths and the multitudes of Jerusalem?

¶ Perchance their boy was suffering and in want —a stranger, a mere child, alone in this noisy and bewildering city — seeking in vain for his parents, and knowing not where to turn nor what to do. He might be in danger. Some accident, some calamity might have befallen him. The awful fate that had threatened his infant life twelve years before came to the minds of the parents in terrifying vividness.

¶ Distracted with grief and anxiety they

searched without rest for two whole days; and yet no tidings, no trace of their child.

¶ Faint with fatigue and sick at heart, the poor mother was almost in despair. Yet she struggled on by her husband's side as they pressed through the crowded thoroughfares and up and down the long and wearisome flights of the Temple steps, searching, inquiring everywhere; retracing their steps again and again; looking wistfully, eagerly on every side, and ever and anon calling his precious name.

¶ Where could he be? Why did they not see him? Why did he not answer? Was he forever lost to them, their wonderful, their beautiful boy?

¶ But hark! What was that they heard?

¶ They were passing through one of the Temple courts. From the farther end the sound of a voice reached their ears.

¶ It was the clear, sweet voice of a boy—their Jesus!

¶ Hurrying forward with eager steps they came upon a group of men gathered about the rabbis of the Sanhedrin, who were here holding their customary school for public discussion.

¶ In the midst of the assembly was the boy Jesus. He was talking, and all were listening in rapt attention.

¶ He was addressing the rabbis, asking and answering questions, wholly unmindful of the audience about him, and oblivious to the surprise and wonder he was creating. A boy, a country lad, discussing theology with the doctors, with the gray-haired scholars of the Temple!

¶ His face was radiant, and his soft, expressive eyes shone with a rare light of soulful intelligence. He talked not as a child, but as one of learning and mature judgment; and as the rabbis and those about them listened to his words, clothed in the music of a voice of angelic sweetness, they were lost in amazement at his wis-

A HEBREW WOMAN

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dom and his eloquence. Never had one of his tender years been known to display such power of expression, such depth of thought, such keen and logical perception and so profound a knowledge of the Scriptures.

¶ His listeners regarded him in marveling admiration. None ventured to interrupt him. General discussion was abandoned; questions and arguments were forgotten. The school had become a profoundly impressed audience. All interest was centered upon the youth.

¶ Suddenly a low cry diverted the attention of the assembly. The boy turned quickly. His mother stood near him with outstretched arms, and the next moment she was pressing him to her sobbing bosom.

¶ Amid tears of joy and expressions of tender affection the parents welcomed him back to their arms. They did not chide him. The mere recital of the sorrow and pain they had suffered

on his account was sufficient reproof for a boy of his affectionate nature. He would never willingly have caused them a moment's uneasiness.

¶ But why, he asked in innocent surprise, had they thus worried about him? Why had they sought him? Did they not know that he was at the Temple? Was it not right that he, who was now a member of the congregation, should be engaged in the all-important affairs of his Father?

¶ Mary and Joseph were startled at the subtlety of his questions. They were at a loss how to answer. There was a depth, a mystery of meaning in his words that they knew not how to interpret.

¶ To his earnest, religious mind, absorbed in its lofty aspirations, it seemed so clear, so evident, that he had been only fulfilling a duty, that for the moment he found it difficult to understand why his conduct should be questioned.

¶ Yet he uttered no protest, no criticism. They

were his parents, and his heart knew only deep remorse at the thought that he had caused them to suffer. In gentle and loving obedience he left the Temple with them, forsaking without a murmur the discussion in which he was so deeply interested. And with their child once more beside them, Mary and Joseph retraced their steps, and together the little family journeyed back to Galilee.

¶ How quiet, how restful, and withal how strangely different the village of Nazareth seemed to the boy upon his return to the home. Though he had been absent so short a while he had entered a new realm of thought and experience. The world had assumed a different aspect. His mental vision had broadened; a new light, a dawning revelation, had come into his life.

CHAPTER SIX

IT was again the time of the Passover. Eighteen years had passed since the first visit of Jesus to Jerusalem, during all of which time he had continued to live in Nazareth, growing up to manhood amid the quiet and impressive surroundings of his rural home, and following in the humble footsteps of his parent as a carpenter.

¶ Once more the Holy City was thronged with its army of pilgrims, and the courts of the Temple swarmed with men and women bent upon the performance of religious duties. The laws of the Jews called for a multitude of ceremonial observances, none of which was more important than the offering of sacrifices; and at this season of the year the outer court, or

court of the Gentiles, was given over to dealers in doves and cattle and other sacrificial animals for the benefit of the worshipers who came from a distance and could not bring their offerings with them. In this court, also, the money-changers plied their vocation of changing Roman money into Jewish coin, which could alone be used for the Temple tithes. Very little of this Jewish money was in circulation, and consequently nearly all of those who came to pay their yearly dues were obliged to resort to these bankers, who did not hesitate to charge exorbitant rates for their services.

¶ The use of the Temple for these mercenary purposes had developed gradually from year to year. The revenue in rent and taxes derived from this source had grown to such proportions that the Temple authorities were loath to relinquish it, and accordingly closed their eyes to the sacrilege they were thus tacitly permitting.

¶ The day of preparation for the feast was at hand, and the court of the Gentiles was filled with a noisy assemblage. Dealers were advertising their stock in loud and lusty voices; buyers were wrangling and disputing, and the coarse shouts of drovers added to the general uproar, while the clink of coins and the cries of animals rose above the din of the jostling crowd.

¶ Suddenly a hush fell upon the scene. A young man, a stranger, appeared within the court. By common impulse all eyes were turned upon him. Armed with a small lash, which he had hastily made from a few cords picked up from the floor, he strode through the crowd and the next moment was driving before him the dealers and their animals.

¶ "Out!" he cried in a voice of commanding authority. "An end to this defilement of the Lord's holy Temple!"

¶ Then turning upon the money-changers he overthrew their tables, scattering their money in all directions upon the floor, and in words of stinging denunciation expelled them also from the court, while many of the buyers and onlookers fled in consternation before the wrathful indignation of this unknown man.

¶ For a moment he stood defiant amid the startled and bewildered crowd. There was in his look and in his bearing something so majestic, so commanding, that none dared to oppose him. Then, with an expression of mingled pity and scorn, he passed quietly out of the court and disappeared.

¶ The news of the occurrence spread rapidly throughout the Temple, and from there into the city streets, exciting general comment and discussion.

¶ "Who is this man?" was asked on all sides. "Who is he that has dared to do this thing?"

¶ In a short time came answering rumors that served to still further arouse public wonderment.

¶ "He is a prophet, a man gifted of God, a worker of miracles. Yea, it is told by men from Galilee that he turned water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana, and there are those who say that a voice spoke to him from Heaven as he stood in the Jordan to be baptized of John."

¶ John was a man who at that time was attracting widespread attention. He had withdrawn from the world and was leading an ascetic life in the valley of the Jordan, whither large numbers from all parts of the country flocked to see and hear him. He called upon his fellow-men to repent; telling them that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and that the Messiah was soon to appear among them. His words of warning and his persistent prophecies regarding the advent of the Christ aroused no little agitation; while the rite of baptism, which he instituted

as a symbol of purification, and which gained for him the title of the Baptist, added greatly to his notoriety.

¶ Speculation regarding the young man in the court of the Gentiles continued with unabated interest. The more the occurrence was discussed the more daring and more wonderful it appeared. There could be no doubt that this was a man of no ordinary powers. It was even whispered that the Baptist had proclaimed him the Messiah; that he had pointed him out as the Saviour of whom he had prophesied.

¶ Yet, after all, was he not simply a Galilean countryman? There were those in the city who professed to know him. According to them he was but a carpenter — a man without rank or learning — Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph of Nazareth.

¶ It was indeed he — he who as a boy had startled the doctors with his wisdom, and who

now, appearing suddenly from a life of obscurity, had fearlessly challenged the Temple rulers by his bold and forcible denouncement of wrong which none had heretofore had the courage to oppose.

¶ It was the first manifestation of a sublime and wondrous purpose that had long animated his being. From the quiet retirement of his village home he had looked upon the world through the unclouded vision of his pure, devout life, and had beheld with earnest solicitude the corruption and spiritual degradation that everywhere surrounded him. His tender, sympathetic heart was filled with compassion for the great mass of his fellow-countrymen, burdened with political and social oppression, and struggling blindly for the light amid the inconsistencies and abuses that marked the religious teachings of the day.

¶ His whole nature thrilled with the realization that he, the carpenter of Nazareth, must

take upon himself the burden of his people's salvation. He felt—nay, he knew with the surety of divine inspiration—that in him lay the power to redeem mankind from its thraldom of sin and darkness.

¶ It was toward the accomplishment of this, the sole and all-absorbing purpose of his life, that the early years of his manhood had been devoted to study and contemplation. In his quiet home or in the seclusion of the fields and wooded hills he had daily sought the Father and communed with Him in prayer. It was to God that he looked at all times for guidance and for strength. In his preparation for the great task before him he was ever conscious that he was but carrying out the will of the Father ; that to him of all men had been intrusted the uplifting, the salvation of the world; that in him the promise of God to His people would be made manifest.

¶ And now, clothed in the might of a definite and unalterable determination, he had entered upon his Father's appointed task, and had signalized the inauguration of his mission by an act of reformation at once so daring, so vigorous, so demonstrative of superior power and authority, that it gained for him immediate public recognition as a man of extraordinary character.

¶ While the conscience-stricken authorities regarded him with mingled fear and resentment, because of the rebuke to them which his action so clearly implied, the people themselves looked upon him with awe and admiration. Nor was this feeling on their part in any way diminished when, later, he again appeared in the Temple and voluntarily addressed the men and women who quickly gathered about him in crowds, curious to look upon him and listen to his words.

¶ With the same fearlessness, with the same

irresistible earnestness that had characterized his first appearance among them, he proclaimed to them the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven. The day of the redemption of Israel had arrived. The new era which the prophets had predicted was at hand. The time of waiting was fulfilled.

¶ His hearers were amazed. They looked one to another with inquiring glances. What was the meaning of this? Could it be true? Who was this man that dared to utter words fraught with such stupendous import?

¶ The boldness and the gravity of his utterances excited unbounded astonishment. But heedless of the commotion thus aroused he continued to address the crowds that flocked about him, directing his remarks particularly to those of the humbler classes. For them he had a message of hope and of cheer. He spoke to them of a brighter, happier life. He told them that he had come to show them the way; to save them from

the wrongs and miseries of the world; to lead them from the darkness of evil to the glad sunlight of truth and love.

¶ As he talked many of his hearers pressed closer. They would hear more, more. His words to them glowed with the radiance of spiritual comfort; their hearts beat with eager hope. Never had they listened to language of such quickening power, such glorious promise.

¶ Yet it was not alone to the poor and the downtrodden that his words appealed. The remarkable statements and teachings of this unknown man, who had so suddenly, so mysteriously appeared in their midst, attracted the attention of all who heard him. Even among the Pharisees—the leading exponents of religion—bound as they were to their narrow and dogmatic ideas, there were many who were deeply impressed with the force and the novelty of his preaching.

The Story of a Young Man

¶ One of them, Nicodemus by name, a man of wealth and learning and of high rank among the Jews, went to Jesus at night, in order that he might speak with him alone and learn from him — this young man, this Galilean stranger — the full truth and meaning of his utterances, which had made so profound an impression upon the Pharisee that he felt convinced that in Jesus he beheld one who spoke through the inspiration of God.

¶ There were many to whom his words brought such soulful conviction, and to whom his impressive personality so strongly appealed, that they unhesitatingly believed him and accepted his sayings as divine truth. There were even those who asked that they might go with him as his disciples, when it was learned that he was about to leave the city, so great was the reverence he inspired.

¶ But, gratifying as this manifestation of regard

A MERCHANT

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must have been to him, he desired for the present no associates other than the four or five friends who had come with him from Galilee. With them as his only companions he set forth from Jerusalem, to continue in other parts of the country the prosecution of his work which had opened so auspiciously and so triumphantly.

¶ He was gladly received wherever he appeared. The synagogues of the various towns through which he passed were thrown open to him, and in them he preached to the people, who flocked from all directions to hear him and to drink in the words of hope and joy that he offered to an oppressed and benighted nation.

¶ His exhortations, his doctrines, everywhere excited astonishment, not only because of their originality and significance, but more so because of the independent authority with which they were delivered. What first impressed his audi-

tors was the remarkable contrast between his manner of preaching and that of the scribes, the religious teachers of the people. Their sermons were devoid of life or inspiration. They confined their discourses chiefly to retailing the opinions of commentators; to the repetition of ceremonial rules and regulations; and they never ventured a statement nor offered an explanation unless it was sanctioned by some recognized master of theology.

¶ Jesus, on the contrary, ignored all masters and commentators; all worldly authority. He needed none to tell him of God and of life. These were the exalted themes that inspired his sermons, and the truth within him was alone his authority. So earnest was his conviction of the verity of his words that he did not hesitate to tell his hearers that their future weal or woe depended upon their acceptance or rejection of the message he bore. It was the majesty of such

authority as this that smote his listeners with awe and irresistibly held their attention.

¶ But even more remarkable was his boldness —his moral courage—as displayed in his denunciation of the abuses and false notions of the day. Station, rank, earthly authority or the world's opinion had no weight with him; they had no terrors for a nature such as his. He possessed that commanding self-reliance, that splendid fearlessness, which comes of true and perfect manhood. He was actuated solely by his duty, his mission—never stopping to question what the results might be to himself.

¶ Nor did he in this respect confine himself alone to words. In his actions, in his every-day life, whenever the opportunity occurred, he openly and unhesitatingly displayed the same inspiring fearlessness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON one occasion, returning to Jerusalem to attend one of the many feasts that were annually celebrated there, he came upon a helpless invalid — a man who had been paralyzed for nearly forty years. In company with many others afflicted with sickness or infirmities this man was lying near one of the pools — the pool of Bethesda — the water of which was supposed to have miraculous curative powers at such times as, for some unknown cause, it became disturbed or changed color.

¶ On these occasions the invalids hastily entered the pool, but the poor paralytic had no one to help him; and each time, before he could reach the water, others crowded in his way and prevented him.

¶ The pathos of his plight deeply touched the heart of Jesus, and with generous sympathy he hastened to relieve the unfortunate sufferer. It mattered not to him that the day was the Sabbath, and that the deed he was about to perform was forbidden on that day as constituting an act of labor. Here was a fellow-creature in pain and distress. His duty lay to him, and not to arbitrary human laws.

¶ Placing his hand tenderly upon the man he bade him rise and walk. This gentle command from the lips of Jesus was alone sufficient. It carried with it the potency of that sublime spiritual force that dominated his being. The man to whom the words were addressed rose slowly from his recumbent position, until at length, taking up the pallet upon which he had been lying, he stood up, freed from his infirmity, and gazed in bewildered amazement upon his benefactor.

¶ The news of the occurrence aroused instant commotion. The restored paralytic, who had long been a familiar figure in the city, was speedily surrounded by a gaping crowd, clamoring with inquisitive interest to know by what means he had been so suddenly cured, and for what reason he was violating the Sabbath by carrying his bed about with him—an act prohibited by the Sabbatical laws.

¶ Over and over again he was obliged to recount his marvelous experience, at the same time offering as an excuse for his breach of the Sabbath the fact that the unknown man who had healed him had commanded him to take up his bed and walk. Jesus had in the meantime disappeared, without being recognized, leaving the people to their various surmises regarding the mysterious man who, by a mere touch, could restore health and vigor to a palsy-stricken body, and who had not only dared to break the Sab-

bath himself, but had also deliberately induced a fellow-mortal to violate the law.

¶ It was not long, however, before he was identified, and the report of his conduct was at once carried to the authorities, who undertook to censure him at the first opportunity. But little were they prepared for the scathing rebuke which he, in return, administered to them for their blindness and perversity in condemning him for an act of charity. Could they not see, he demanded, that what he had done was inspired of God? Did they not realize that in taking him to task for doing the work of the Father they were holding the Almighty accountable to their petty judgment of right and wrong?

¶ Of the many unhappy features of existing religious thought and social conditions there was none more marked than the extraordinary strictness regarding the outward observance of the Sabbath. From the simple command that the

Lord had given to the people through Moses, the scribes had elaborated a vast array of injunctions and prohibitions covering every detail of social, individual and public life, even to the question of the kinds of knots that might lawfully be tied on that day — rules that were so manifestly absurd as clearly to indicate how far remote was the relationship existing between them and the piety that they were supposed to represent.

¶ It is not difficult, therefore, to understand how a nature like that of Jesus' rebelled against such perversions of the Lord's commandments. Though he incurred the deep enmity of the scribes and the Pharisees by his defiance of their authority, and realized that he would be subjected to their persecution should he again violate their cherished rules, it did not deter him from showing to the world that mercy and love rise superior to any earthly restrictions; and it

was only a short while after the incident at Jerusalem that he again had occasion to demonstrate it.

¶ It was a Sabbath day, and he was holding one of his usual discourses in a synagogue, surrounded by a congregation of interested and critical listeners. Among them was a man with a withered hand, and the scribes and Pharisees who were present looked on with unkindly interest, secretly hoping that Jesus would give them an opportunity to accuse him of Sabbath-breaking by attempting to heal the man, who, according to the law, could not receive any relief until the holy day was over, as he was in no immediate danger of death.

¶ They inquired of Jesus whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath; thinking thereby to draw him into a discussion in which he might commit himself by some tangible demonstration of his unorthodox views.

¶ Divining their motive with that rare insight into human nature which was ever one of the distinguishing qualities of his superior mind, he did not at once reply to them; but, instead, he called upon the cripple to stand up.

¶ Instantly there was a hush throughout the room.

¶ Then turning to his questioners he asked; "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?"

¶ The suddenness of the question and the unexpected form in which the case was presented to them took them aback. They who had thought to entrap this Galilean reformer by their usual mode of subtle questioning were themselves confounded. They had met one who was more than their equal. They knew not for the moment how to reply, and their discomfiture was increased when, continuing with his remarks, couched in the fluent and forceful language of righteous indignation, Jesus arraigned

them for their uncharitable motives, and in final reply to their question commanded the cripple to hold out his hand; and forthwith, exerting upon it his divine influence, he restored it to life.

¶ In addition to his inspiring words and conduct, which drew many to him as their acknowledged leader, this gift of healing—this miraculous power over physical infirmity—added a potent and wonderful charm to his greatness.

¶ There had been others gifted with like ability, but in none had it been so marked, so comprehensive, so significant of divine power as in the case of this marvelous man. Even the lepers were cleansed at the touch of his hand.

¶ The report of his teachings and his cures spread through Judea and as far north as Galilee, his native province, toward which his journeyings gradually led him, and where he finally

A ROMAN CENTURION

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arrived after an absence of several months. He was heartily welcomed by the inhabitants, who were proud to claim him as a fellow-Galilean—a man who had made his mark in Jerusalem and whose name was being heralded throughout the land.

¶ He who a few months before had been an unknown carpenter now commanded the attention of the public, and rose before the world as a man of mighty possibilities. And scarcely had he returned to Galilee when there occurred an incident that more than justified the popular opinion of him and confirmed beyond all doubt the many reports of his miraculous powers.

¶ One of the officials of the court of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, learning that Jesus was in the town of Cana, came to him in person to ask his aid on behalf of his dying son. He was a Roman nobleman, a member of a class professedly contemptuous of the Jews; yet he

recognized in this Galilean teacher a personality that transcended the bounds of caste; a personality superior to his own nobility of birth and office, and in humble supplication he craved that Jesus would return with him to Capernaum, that the life of his boy might be spared.

¶ He had the power to have summoned Jesus to his home; — to have commanded his attendance upon him; but he had come to him instead. He had left his palace and had traveled a distance of more than twenty miles, that he might speak with the man whose works had aroused his reverent admiration, and that he might ask of him the assistance which he felt that he, this divinely gifted physician, could alone give him.

¶ Deeply touched by a faith so sincere, on the part of one from whom it was so little to be expected, Jesus willingly responded to the nobleman's prayer. But not in the manner that the

supplicant and those about him had expected. He bade the nobleman return home alone. He would not go with him; it was unnecessary. His prayer was already answered; for even as he spoke the fever left the child, as the father learned upon his return home the following day.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FLUSHED with the success that had crowned the first months of his mission, Jesus returned at length to his home, the little town of Nazareth. He entered it quietly and hastened at once to his mother. She should be the first to welcome him. His first salutation should be to her. The bond between mother and son was one of peculiar tenderness and endearment — a sympathy of love that only the hearts of these two could understand. This had been the first long absence of Jesus from his mother, and as he folded her in his arms he knew by her tears and by the fervency of her silent embrace how deep was the joy that welled within her loving heart.

¶ He had returned home on the eve of a Sab-

bath-day; and on the following morning, as had been his habit since boyhood, he accompanied his mother to the synagogue. Like those of nearly all the towns in Palestine, the synagogue of Nazareth was a low, rectangular building of stone, situated on the summit of a hill overlooking the town. Thither the townspeople wended their way; the men with their phalacteries, or amulets, tied on their forehead and wrist, and the women veiled in white and walking sedately with downcast eyes to the tinkling accompaniment of their metal anklets.

¶ The air of the synagogue was sweet with the refreshing odor of mint, which was strewn here and there upon the floor. Removing their sandals at the doorway Jesus and his mother entered and took their places among the other worshippers. They did not, however, remain together, for the men and women occupied separate portions of the synagogue; the women

being assigned to a partitioned space near the entrance, where custom required that they should remain standing during the service, while the men occupied the benches in the main part of the room or seated themselves upon the floor.

¶ The first part of a Sabbath morning's service, which consisted of a liturgy and the recitation of passages from the Pentateuch, was followed always by a reading from the Prophets and a short commentary on the Scripture. This feature of the synagogue worship was commonly assigned to some member of the congregation, and on this morning Jesus stepped forward and volunteered his services. He was accordingly invited to come to the pulpit and read the lesson for the day from the book of Isaiah.

¶ The minister handed him the rolled manuscript, and as Jesus opened it in search for the text the congregation looked on with indiffer-

strange ideas? He belongs to no school. By what authority does he, a mere carpenter, thus preach to us? Aye, whence comes his presumptuous claim to the Messiahship! It is absurd; it is blasphemous! He has been trifling with us!"

¶ Jesus was overwhelmed. His sensitive nature recoiled with pain and mortification before these unkind comments as they became gradually more loudly and more arrogantly spoken. He realized at once the depth of their meaning. His old-time friends and neighbors were insinuating that his words had been inspired by some unholy power. It was more than he could endure. His soul cried out against this cruel imputation, and, addressing his critics in a voice quivering with emotion, he laid bare with straightforward, stinging accusation their uncharitable and sinister motives.

¶ Wrought up by his words to a state of anger and excitement the congregation interrupted

"Overcome with grief and bitter disappointment, Jesus left Nazareth"

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him with shouts and threatening gestures. He attempted to proceed; but his voice was drowned in the uproar; and a moment later he was seized and hurried out of the synagogue.

¶ "Kill him!" came from many excited voices. "Yea, put him to death! He is an impostor, a blasphemer! Let us cast him over the precipice!" and in the centre of a turbulent crowd of men he was borne along toward the edge of a deep ravine.

¶ Was it possible that they really meant to kill him? Was this to be his reward? Was this his welcome to the town that had been his home since childhood?

¶ Realizing their murderous intent, he suddenly stopped. Without a word, he cast upon the men about him a look of such deep reproach, of such commanding protest, that they shrank from him in shame and fear, and permitted him to pass through and go his way.

Overcome with grief and bitter disappointment, Jesus left the town. He had entered it so full of joyous anticipations, and now he was leaving it — leaving it forever — rejected, humiliated, scorned by his own people! Of what avail had been his mission? What meant his successes, his triumphs, in the face of such a crushing blow!

CHAPTER NINE

THE clear waters of the lake of Galilee, stirred into gentle ripples by the cool and perfumed breezes that swept down from the surrounding garden-covered hills, shimmered tranquilly beneath the radiance of a tropic sky. It was a Sabbath morning in the early summer. The streets of Capernaum were hushed and lifeless.

The place was one of much importance among the many towns that bordered the lake, and on other days of the week was the scene of a thriving centre of business, with its fisheries and its markets. To-day, however, all work was laid aside, and the solemn spirit of the day reigned supreme. Fishing-boats rocked listlessly at their moorings, the shops and market-places were de-

serted, and a sense of rest and quietude brooded over the little town.

¶ But as the hour for the morning service approached an unusual stir was noticeable among the inhabitants. The streets became filled with men and women hastening with eager steps toward the synagogue and conversing in earnest tones. An event of absorbing interest was uppermost in the minds of all.

¶ The famous young rabbi was in town! Yea, the new teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, of whom all the country was talking! Beyond doubt he would attend the synagogue that morning. It would give them an opportunity to see him. Perchance, too, they might hear him talk. It would indeed be strange were he not asked to address the congregation.

¶ Jesus had reached the town early in the morning, attended by four of his devoted friends, who had joined him the previous day. They

A FISHER-MAN

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had been with him before as his companions and disciples, but upon his visit to Nazareth had returned to their homes. They were lowly fishermen, these friends of Jesus — Andrew and his brother Simon Peter, and two other brothers, James and John; — men of but little learning, yet possessed of true hearts and generous, sympathetic impulses.

While they reverently acknowledged the superiority of their friend and master, there had grown up between them an unaffected intimacy of brotherly love, so that when, after an absence of some little time, he unexpectedly came upon them the preceding day while engaged with their nets upon the shore of the lake, and asked them to once more accompany him and assist him in his work, they gladly accepted the invitation and went with him at once.

His cruel rejection by the people of his native town had cast a gloomy shadow upon the very

threshold of his life's undertaking. But not for one instant had it affected his exalted purpose, nor deterred him from going steadfastly forward with his work. He realized that it was but a foretaste of the trials and sorrows that must come to him in fulfilling the mission that the Father had ordained for him.

¶ Yet the welcome accorded him by the citizens of other towns did much to compensate for the grief of his experience at Nazareth. He was received with marked cordiality wherever he appeared, and now, as on this Sabbath morning, he entered the synagogue of Capernaum, in company with his four companions, he was conscious of a murmur of welcome from the unusually large congregation that had assembled in anticipation of seeing him.

¶ When the formal exercises of the meeting were concluded he was invited to preach — a courtesy that was commonly extended to visit-

ing rabbis. Many marvelous reports had reached the people of Capernaum regarding his eloquence and the novelty of his teachings, and as he came forward and took his seat upon the little platform near the centre of the room a buzz of eager curiosity ran through the assembly.

But ere he had spoken four or five sentences curiosity gave way to wonder and amazement. No previously formed conception of him had prepared his listeners for the remarkable force of his words and the overmastering influence of his personality. Never before in all their experiences had any one spoken to them as did this man Jesus. Never before had such eloquence, such soul-stirring words, been heard within the synagogue of Capernaum. No scribe, no rabbi had ever taught with such commanding authority, nor given utterance to such vivid and such inspiring thoughts.

¶ He drew his audience closer, closer. His power was fascinating, irresistible. Every heart was beating in uncontrollable response to the fervid music of his eloquence. The people sat as if entranced. They scarcely breathed. The man before them seemed to absorb their very being. They gazed upon him spellbound, thrilled by his every word, his every glance.

¶ Suddenly a wild and piercing shriek rent the air. A man, disheveled and with countenance horribly distorted, sprang up amid the congregation. With fierce gesticulations and frothing at the mouth he struggled frantically toward Jesus, at the same time crying out in the frenzied and incoherent speech of a maniac.

¶ In an instant the place was in an uproar. A wild terror seized upon the people. They became panic stricken. Oblivious to the danger that threatened the young rabbi they rushed toward the doorway.

¶ Then above the noise and confusion rose the clear, calm voice of Jesus. He commanded silence. The retreating congregation stopped, abashed and overcome. Then fearlessly addressing himself to the mad man, he bade him hold his peace, and charged the evil spirit that possessed him to come forth; and before the astonished gaze of the people the man, who a moment before had been a raving maniac, sank helplessly at the feet of Jesus, restored to his right mind.

¶ Passing forth from the synagogue, Jesus retired with his companions to the home of Andrew and Peter. He was weary and in need of rest. He had walked many miles during the week, everywhere and at all times addressing those that flocked about him, and constantly called upon to lend his divine aid to the unfortunate. But instead of finding the comfort he now sought he came upon a scene of sorrow and distress in which he was himself called upon to be the comforter.

¶ The mother of Peter's wife was suffering with a violent attack of fever. The inmates of the house knew not where to turn for help ; but the moment they perceived Jesus they appealed to him. Ever animated by a touching sympathy for those in affliction, he forthwith approached the bedside of the suffering woman, and taking her by the hand, raised her tenderly from the pillow, at the same time speaking to her in a voice of gentle cheer and encouragement ; and within a few moments, under the soothing influence of his spiritual power, the fever subsided and the woman was able to leave her bed.

¶ The news of this, coupled with the miraculous occurrence at the morning service, spread with surprising rapidity, and formed the sole topic of conversation throughout the town.

¶ With the setting of the sun, which marked the end of the Sabbath and permitted the return to ordinary duties and privileges, a large number

of persons came hurrying to the house at which Jesus was stopping. From every street and every lane, and from nearby towns and villages they came, the great majority of them afflicted with infirmities or disease. They had learned of what he had done and now besought his aid in their behalf.

¶ With loving pity he came forth and laid his hands with their revivifying touch upon each and every one in turn; restoring sight and speech, awakening the troubled mind to reason, and bringing back the glow of health to wan and wasted bodies. It mattered not to him that he was fatigued and was seeking a few hours' rest before the morrow's toil. Before him were suffering fellow-creatures. His first duty was to them, and with a smile or a cheering word he greeted them all.

¶ It was nightfall ere the last visitor went his way, rejoicing and glorifying God. But scarcely

had the first signs of dawn appeared when again the space in front of the little house was filled with the maimed, the sick and the blind, clamoring selfishly for Rabbi Jesus to heal them.

¶ But Jesus was not in the house. He had disappeared. Hastening anxiously to a neighboring hill, where they thought he might have retired in accordance with a habit they had learned to know, his friends found him in a secluded spot engaged in prayer. He had risen while it was yet night, and had come to this lonely and desert place that he might commune alone with God, and gain from Him, the Father, fresh strength and courage.

¶ But even here he was not free from disturbance. No sooner had his companions found him and told him of the sick who awaited him, than many others sought him out and begged him to return to town and heal their friends and relatives.

¶ But much as his heart yearned for the helpless creatures who were calling for him, and notwithstanding the opportunity thus offered to increase his personal popularity, he would not permit himself to be swerved from the true and higher purpose of his mission.

¶ "No," he replied in his gentle yet firm voice, to those who besought him, "I have come, not merely to heal bodily infirmities, but to preach the good tidings of the Kingdom of God, and to call men to repentance. Do not, therefore, ask me to remain here, for I must go to the other towns as well, that all may hear the truth and learn of the salvation that awaits them. Come," he continued, addressing his disciples, "our work lies before us."

CHAPTER TEN

UP to this time the labors of Jesus had been in the nature of preliminary work, more or less intermittent, and governed by no set plans. But henceforth his course of action was one of definite and systematic effort combined with unremitting toil.

¶ With Capernaum as a centre he began now a series of short journeyings throughout the province of Galilee. Attended by his disciples, he traveled on foot from one place to another, teaching in the synagogue of each town, or in the open air when the accommodations were not sufficient for the numbers that came to hear him.

¶ Events as stirring and as trying as those that had marked his present visit to Capernaum be-

came now his daily experience. At every town, at every stopping-place, the inhabitants poured forth to greet him, eager to harken to his words or to invoke his aid. The sick were placed by the roadside, in the streets, and in the doorways, that he might touch them as he passed. The blind and the dumb, the insane and the epileptic, the diseased and the plague-stricken, the maimed and the deformed — all implored and all received his mercy.

¶ Misery and distress surrounded him on every hand. They intruded themselves even into his lodgings. On one occasion a man suffering with palsy was carried up the outer stairway and lowered through the roof of the house at which Jesus was stopping ; the crowd that surrounded the dwelling being so great that it was impossible to gain an entrance for the sufferer through the doorway.

¶ Wherever he turned men cried to him for

help, thoughtful only of their own burdens, their own afflictions; never realizing that he who with infinite compassion laid his hands upon them and bade them take up their beds and walk, was ofttimes himself faint and weary with incessant labor, hungering for food, and knowing not where to rest his tired body.

¶ So numerous and so startling were the cures he effected that reports concerning them spread rapidly in all directions. Not only did they stir the entire population of Galilee, but the fame of the young teacher extended throughout all Palestine and into the bordering territories, and attracted to him large numbers of persons from every quarter.

¶ His name was on all lips; his sayings were quoted far and wide. His journeys became triumphal marches, for there were soon gathered about him a large number of deeply interested men and women, who regularly accompanied

him on his daily walks, while the populace everywhere hailed him with enthusiastic demonstrations of welcome.

¶ The wonder inspired by his abilities as a healer grew with each succeeding day, and rose at length to reverent awe when it became manifest that his powers not only held dominion over physical infirmities, but transcended the realm of even death itself.

¶ It happened, one day, as he was approaching the village of Nain attended by the usual throng, that he met a funeral procession passing slowly out through the gate. A poor widow was about to bury her only son, and the sorrowing villagers had come with her, in token of their sympathy for the broken-hearted woman.

¶ The scene was one of inexpressible sadness. Stepping apart from his followers, Jesus approached the weeping mother and addressed her in tones of tenderest sympathy. At this un-

expected interruption the procession stopped, and, in the hush that followed, the startled onlookers heard the voice of Jesus commanding the widow's son to arise, and the next moment they beheld the young man sitting up and heard him speak as Jesus took him by the hand and assisted him to rise from the open-frame bier on which he had been lying.

¶ A gasp of astonishment rose from the beholders. Affrighted and bewildered they turned one to another for explanation. What manner of man was this who could thus triumph over the grave? Had such a miracle been known since the days of Elisha? Truly, a great prophet had come among them, and a thousand tongues hastened to proclaim the marvel that had just been witnessed.

¶ The rapidly widening field of work resulting from the popularity of his mission soon con-

vinced Jesus of the necessity of gathering about him a circle of immediate attendants, who could be constantly in his company and receive from him such instructions as would enable them in due time to divide with him his ever-increasing labors, by acting as his apostles or representatives. Accordingly, from the disciples who were following him he chose a company of twelve; most of them plain, unpretentious men, destitute of learning, and belonging to the poor and lowly classes.

¶ Among their number was one, Matthew by name, who was a publican, a collector of taxes. His occupation made him a social outcast; for so great was the Jewish hatred of Roman taxation, that any Israelite who became a publican was excommunicated, and, in the estimation of the Pharisees, was no better than a robber or a murderer; unfit to hold the slightest intercourse with any self-respecting Jew.

PETER

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¶ It was, therefore, a bold step for Jesus to deliberately choose a man of this class for one of his disciples. He fully realized that by so doing he forfeited any possible chance of securing the goodwill or recognition of the influential classes. But with his supreme indifference to the narrow prejudices of the world he selected Matthew because of his qualities as a man, as a fellow-being, regardless of his station or his life conditions.

¶ In calm defiance of the strict ideas of the Pharisees, who, for fear of being defiled, religiously shrank from any contact with the common people, he mingled freely and at all times with the lower classes and those whom public opinion had branded as sinners: the downtrodden, the outcast, the forsaken; the poor unfortunates whom the religious leaders of the day, with their self-righteous notions of virtue and propriety, regarded as hopelessly lost and as unworthy of assistance.

¶ It was to persons such as these, both men and women, that Jesus devoted his special attention. He went among them as a counselor, as a friend, as a brother; cheering them with words of comfort and of hope, and recognizing them as equal before God with all mankind. It was they who most needed his help, and it mattered not to him that by his intercourse with them he aroused the indignation of the other rabbis and the scribes.

¶ From the very first the Pharisees and religious teachers had looked upon him with suspicion. As his popularity increased their ill-feeling ripened into jealous enmity, and they availed themselves of every possible opportunity to harass him by publicly criticising his conduct, in the hope of humiliating him and lessening his influence with the people.

¶ To this end, also, they sought to belittle his miraculous powers, and to poison the public

mind by asserting that he was in league with Satan, especially in his remarkable cures of demoniacs, or persons suffering from the influence of evil spirits. Not content with this malicious accusation, they endeavored to have it believed that he was himself possessed of a demon—that his mind was affected; an insinuation that found support, not only in the strangeness of his teachings and the startling nature of his claims, but more particularly in the extraordinary zeal that characterized his labors.

¶ It was undoubtedly true that in this latter respect he differed very greatly from other teachers, with their monotonous routine of spiritless precepts and trifling formalism. His whole life force was concentrated upon the accomplishment of a single purpose—the redemption, the uplifting, of mankind.

¶ At times the demands upon him were so great that he could not find time even to eat; and on

one occasion he was so engrossed in his benevolent work, and gave himself up to it with such tireless enthusiasm, utterly forgetful of himself and his needs, that the cruel slander instigated by the Pharisees found justification in the minds of some of his own friends, who, with misguided solicitude, sought to interfere, convinced that he was indeed beside himself.

¶ With trials such as these to contend with in the midst of his exhausting labors, and coupled many times with the sad realization that the multitudes who flocked about him were more often attracted by selfish desire for assistance than by the glorious truths he announced to them, it was but small wonder that he sometimes questioned the success of his mission.

¶ But without a murmur of complaint, he continued steadfastly with his teachings. It mattered not where his audience happened to be; he addressed himself to his fellow-men everywhere

—on the mountain side, on the shore of the lake, on the highways, in the villages, in the synagogues, in the houses. Wherever men and women gathered about him, there he taught them and preached to them.

His sermons appealed to the heart, to the emotions. Clothed in simple yet fervent language, they rang with the eloquence of truth. At times they were direct and forceful statements. Again, they were in the attractive form of parables; but at all times their purpose was to proclaim and define the Kingdom of God, which he, as the representative of the Father, had come to establish. Not a kingdom of earthly splendor, such as a popular belief had taught that the Messiah would inaugurate, but a spiritual dominion of love and humility; a kingdom within the reach of every repentant and believing soul.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NEARLY a year had now elapsed since the beginning of Jesus's Galilean ministry. He had been absent from Capernaum for some time, and it was with much enthusiasm that the inhabitants one morning received the news that he had once more returned, in company with his twelve disciples, who had just completed their first missionary work; having traveled through the more remote parts of Galilee, preaching and healing in accordance with the instructions of the master.

¶ The people of the surrounding country were soon pouring forth to welcome him, and the throng was increased by passing bands of pilgrims on their way to the Passover. But as both he and the disciples were fatigued and in need

of food he directed that they cross the lake, in order to avoid the crowds that were rapidly gathering. Accordingly, they entered a boat and passed over to a secluded spot at the foot of a mountain, about six miles distant.

¶ Divining his destination, many of the people hurried toward the place on foot, and were joined on the way by others from the intermediate villages, so that when Jesus stepped from the boat, thinking to find himself alone with his companions, he beheld a multitude already awaiting him, and companies of men, women and children hastening forward from all directions.

¶ Instead of taking offense and resenting their intrusion his heart was filled with compassion. They had come to him for encouragement and help, and, forgetting in a moment his own wants, he went among them with kindly words of welcome; and as they gathered about him

on the grass-covered hillside he cheered their hearts with one of his ever-beautiful and soul-thrilling sermons.

¶ Scarcely had he finished speaking when the cries of the sick and afflicted who had dragged themselves to the spot drew him here and there amid the assembled thousands; and so completely absorbed did he become in his labor of love and mercy, that he failed to note the passage of time until one of his disciples called attention to the lengthening shadows, and suggested that the people be dismissed, in order that they might return to the villages before nightfall.

¶ But with that loving thoughtfulness that at all times characterized his nature he could not brook the thought of sending them away tired and hungry, as they must indeed be. They had been there several hours; many of them had come from a long distance, and they had come to greet him and to be comforted.

¶ Presently the restless crowds were stilled. The faint and the weary ceased their murmurings. The rabbi was about to feed them; to give food to the hungry thousands.

¶ In obedience to his instructions they seated themselves in small groups, half doubting, half expectant. Was it possible that he intended to feed them all and in this place?

¶ Yea, it was indeed true; for, behold! even now they were being served with bread and fish.

¶ The grateful refreshment was eagerly seized upon. The scene of a short time before was transformed into that of an inspiring feast; more than five thousand, men, women and children, eating together in thankful communion amid the sunset glories of Nature's solitude.

¶ Then, suddenly, from many directions at once, came the question, "Whence comes this food?"

¶ Each man looked to his neighbor. "Yea, whence comes this food? Was it not said that

the rabbi's disciples could find but a few loaves of bread and two or three small fishes?"

¶ The repast came to an end amid increasing surprise and astonishment, which rapidly gave way to intense excitement as the people realized that they were the witnesses of a stupendous miracle. Verily, it was a repetition of the feeding of Israel in the wilderness! Lo, the very sign by which the scribes had said that the Messiah would manifest himself!

¶ Shouts now arose above the excited comments of the throng. A wild enthusiasm, an ecstasy of religious and patriotic emotion, seized upon the people. Jesus was their King, their Messiah! he would lead them to victory against the Romans! Jerusalem should be regained! Israel should triumph above her enemies!

¶ In a tumult of tempestuous zeal, shouting, gesticulating, the mighty host surged forward in obedience to a sudden, overmastering impulse.

¶ "Hail to Jesus, the King, the ruler of Israel! Come let us put him at our head. We will follow him to the Holy City! Hail to the conqueror! Hail to the Messiah! Jesus, our King, our King!"

¶ But Jesus had disappeared. At the first manifestation of excitement he had hastily directed his disciples to cross the lake, and had himself sought retirement in the solitude of the mountain; weak and exhausted, and bowed down with an overwhelming grief.

¶ The end had come. He had witnessed the climax, the final result, of all his months of self-sacrificing labor among the people of Galilee. His mission was a failure! The people had not understood him. And now — now they would reject him!

¶ Only too clearly he saw that his refusal to act as their political leader and his failure to

"He sank upon the ground in the anguish of unutterable sorrow"

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fulfill their material conception of the Messiah would result in their turning from him. This was the outcome of his teachings and the reward for his labors. This was the return for his love and for all that he had endured for the sake of his fellow-beings.

¶ The cries of the multitude still rang in his ears—"Hail to the Messiah! Jesus, our King! our King!" From the plain below they rose upon the evening air, torturing his soul with their bitter significance. Then, gradually, they grew fainter and died away. Failing to find him the enthusiasm of the people had turned to disappointment; and the last murmur of voices was gathered into the mournful solitude.

¶ The day faded into night, and about him was the desolation of the wilderness. Alone with the Father, and beneath the cold and unpitying light of the stars, he sank upon the ground in the anguish of unutterable sorrow.

T happened as Jesus had foreseen. The Galileans turned from him in contempt. They were disappointed and angered at his refusal to accept the honor which they were ready to bestow upon him.

CHAPTER TWELVE

¶ On the following day, in the synagogue of Capernaum, he endeavored to explain to them his spiritual character. They could not comprehend it. It was so utterly different from their preconceived notions of the Messianic King, that it only heightened their resentment and drove from him many of those who had followed him as disciples.

¶ But the faith of his chosen twelve shone through the clouds of this trying ordeal as a softening ray of hope and encouragement. Their

love for the master was too deep, too sincere, to be thus suddenly shattered. Nor was their devotion in any way diminished by the adversities which now quickly followed his waning popularity. They had shared with him his triumphs and his fame, and they would share with him his misfortunes and his trials.

¶ It was rumored that Herod Antipas, who had but recently executed the reformer and prophet, John the Baptist, after a cruel imprisonment of many months, was now seeking an opportunity to lay hold of Jesus; having become alarmed at the widespread enthusiasm aroused by him throughout the province.

¶ Menaced by this danger and spurned by his fellow-countrymen, the young rabbi's ministry in Galilee came to an abrupt and thankless termination. With his company of devoted friends he forsook the familiar scenes of his daily labors and retreated to the most distant and retired parts

of the province—an outcast, a fugitive; no longer attended by enthusiastic crowds nor surrounded by admiring multitudes, but seeking refuge in solitude and retirement.

¶ But the threatened violence of Herod, coupled with the ingratitude of the people, was but a minor peril compared with the ever-increasing hatred of the scribes and other ecclesiastical leaders. The Pharisees at Jerusalem had watched the movements of this new reformer with unfeigned anxiety and displeasure, and had but recently sent deputations to Galilee to act in concert with their local adherents in opposing him.

¶ They resented his teachings as heretical and revolutionary. But more particularly were they incensed at his deliberate defiance of many of their cherished rites and observances—washing the hands before eating, fasting on certain occasions, and other like formalities, which Jesus

not only failed to observe, but which, as religious requirements, he denounced as vain and contrary to the true spirit of God's will.

¶ The antagonism of the Pharisees, which had thus been aroused from the very beginning, was constantly augmented, not only by their failure to produce any substantial opposition to the new teacher, but by the manner in which he met their attacks; turning upon them the clear light of spiritual purity and exposing to the world their hypocrisy and inconsistencies.

¶ And yet — true to the sublime loftiness of his character — his words of rebuke and reprobation were directed against his opponents as a class — not as individuals; for as creatures of God they were his fellow-beings, and as such were worthy of his charity and his pity.

¶ Only a short time before one of the most prominent men of Capernaum — Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue — had come to him imploring

A PHARISEE

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his aid on behalf of his dying daughter. With his brother Pharisees he had previously availed himself of every chance to oppose the young reformer. But now, in his anxiety for his child, all his bitterness as a Pharisee had departed. He was but a human being, a father, pleading for the life of a loved one. Throwing himself at the feet of Jesus he humbly acknowledged the superiority of him whom he had been persecuting, and begged that he would now assist him.

¶ Well might Jesus have spurned him with contempt. Well might he have found revenge in this brief triumph over his opponent. But, with that love and forgiveness which formed the keynote of his teachings, and which ever illumined his beautiful nature, he hastened to the assistance of his fellowman, and called into existence for the sake of this one sorrowing soul the mightiest and most marvelous manifestation of

his exalted being—the power of life over death.

¶ During the father's absence the daughter had died, and when Jesus reached the house the mourners had already assembled. Bidding them cease their noisy lamentations, he entered the room in which the young girl lay, and taking her by the hand, even as he had done with the widow's son at Nain, he called her back to life.

¶ His bitterest enemies were at all times forced to acknowledge his transcendent powers; yet it only added to their malicious envy, and it may well be imagined that they were filled with consternation at the enthusiasm which marked his presence in Galilee during the past year. As the accepted leaders of the people, the scribes and Pharisees fiercely resented this intrusion on the part of one whose teachings were so strikingly at variance with their own.

¶ Appreciating their inability to cope with the situation, they succeeded in arousing against Jesus the animosity of the Herodians and the Sadducees, two of the most influential classes of the nation, representing the Jewish aristocracy and the higher priesthood. Selfish and conservative, fond of worldly pleasures, and courting the favor of the Romans, they took but little interest in the religious welfare of the people; so that while the Pharisees, in their fanatical zeal for everything that pertained to religion, were deeply concerned regarding the ministry of Jesus, the Sadducees took no notice of it until the excitement and enthusiasm aroused on all sides gave to it the appearance of leading to a political disturbance.

¶ This they knew would bring down the iron hand of their Roman masters and imperil their power and their property, and out of fear of such a consequence they finally joined with the Phari-

sees in a common cause against the man who was threatening the peace of the nation.

¶ Taking advantage of his sudden rejection by the Galileans, his adversaries pressed their opposition with more boldness and determination. They spied upon his movements and dogged his footsteps, and, whenever they overtook him, arrogantly disputed with him on points of law and theology, in the hope that he might so far commit himself as to give them ground for bringing him before the authorities.

¶ For six weary months he led the life of a fugitive. There was no house, no town nor village — no, not even any section of the country, that he could now call his home or where he was safe from molestation. His journeyings were no longer triumphal marches from town to town, amid the ringing voices of the multitudes, but were long and weary flights through mountain wilds and across the desert wastes.

¶ Then, accompanied by his disciples and a number of his former followers, who had again joined him, he bade farewell to Galilee and turned his face toward Jerusalem.

¶ It was a bold and perilous step. It would bring him in direct contact with the hostile authorities and place him at the mercy of his enemies. His disciples urged him against it; but he answered that, although his labors in Galilee were finished, his mission was not yet fulfilled. He still had work to do. There were many of his people to whom he had not yet appealed; many to whom the tidings of deliverance had not yet come.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IT was the month of October, the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, that most picturesque festival of the Jews, when for seven days the people lived in booths of leafy branches, to commemorate the tent-life of Israel in the wilderness. All who could, celebrated the festival at Jerusalem, and the great city was now embowered in a mass of foliage. The courts of the houses, the roofs, the streets, were filled with booths. Every available space was occupied by these leafy structures as shelters for the throngs that were gathered together on this festal occasion.

¶ Three days of the feast had passed when suddenly a rumor filled the air. Then came the news. It passed with lightning-like rapidity

from one to another. The whole city was astir. Jesus, the Galilean, had arrived!

¶ Flocking to the Temple the curious and expectant populace beheld the famous teacher, the great reformer, the mysterious, the wonderful man, whose name was known from one end of Palestine to the other, and the reports of whose miracles and teachings had stirred Jerusalem with wonder and apprehension.

¶ The discussions regarding him had led to various opinions. There were those who believed him the Christ, the Messiah. Many regarded him simply with curious interest, knowing not what to think concerning his claims, yet admitting the righteousness of his teachings, while not a few condemned him as an impostor.

¶ The seclusiveness that had marked his daily life for the past few months was now thrown aside. From the day of his arrival he fre-

quented the Temple and boldly preached to the crowds that thronged about him with eager interest. Such absolute fearlessness completely disconcerted the Temple authorities. They knew that he was aware of their unfriendly feelings and intentions, and yet he daringly invaded the very precincts of their tribunal, and calmly defied them. Overcome with astonishment, and hardly knowing what course to pursue in the face of such superlative manhood, they contented themselves with listening to the fearless intruder, convinced that sooner or later his utterances would serve them as a pretext for action against him.

¶ Whenever he appeared in any one of the Temple courts he was immediately surrounded by a mass of men and women. He was never at a loss for an audience. Eager listeners were ever pressing forward to be within sight of him as he sat and preached in the midst of these im-

promptu gatherings. The people of Jerusalem could now understand how he had made so great a popular impression. His power lay as much in himself — in the influence of his personality — as in what he said. His calm dignity, the undefinable majesty of his bearing, and the intense, soulful earnestness of his voice gave to his words the force of an authority that was more than human.

¶ Suddenly, in the midst of one of his discourses, he was interrupted by a commotion on the outskirts of the assembled audience. The Temple police were seen advancing. The authorities had decided upon his arrest. His utterances were too presumptuous, too heretical — nay, they were blasphemous. Already he was arousing undue discussion and excitement. Hundreds were becoming converts to his heterodox teachings. His influence must be speedily checked.

¶ Unmindful of the impending danger, Jesus continued with his address. The guards hesitated. The voice of the man smote them with a strange fear. His words thrilled them with awe. They stopped and listened, overcome by his impressive dignity and the power of his eloquence. They feared to approach him, and returned empty-handed to their superior officers.

¶ The chief priests and their brother officials soon realized that the arrest of Jesus would be a more serious matter than they had anticipated. Not only had they as yet no material evidence against him, but the popularity he was rapidly creating also rendered it both difficult and hazardous to publicly apprehend him. There were many who would not hesitate to take his part, and his arrest might therefore bring about the very result which the chief priests — the Sadducees — were laboring to

avoid. So that while they had thought to quickly end the career of this Galilean, the days and the weeks went by and he still fearlessly pursued his ministry in their very midst.

¶ During this period of his labors in Jerusalem and the neighboring parts of the country he was enabled for the first time since the commencement of his work to taste of the pleasures of home. Close to Jerusalem, though hidden from view by the Mount of Olives, lay the little town of Bethany, its white, flat-roofed houses half concealed amid the orchards and the gardens that surrounded them. In this charming and sequestered spot dwelt two sisters, Mary and Martha, and their brother, Lazarus.

¶ In this little household Jesus was at all times a welcome and honored guest. The embowered dwelling, with its tranquil surroundings and refreshing comforts, stood ever open to receive him. It offered a restful shelter from the con-

fusion and the dangers of the Temple courts or the exhausting labors of his occasional missionary journeys. It was indeed a home, a refuge, a haven of rest, hallowed by the loving ministrations of noble women and the friendship of a true and worthy man.

¶ The attachment between Jesus and these friends at Bethany dated from their first meeting; and, nourished by the sweet familiarity of increasing affection, it grew ever stronger and more beautiful with the passing of time. The brother and sisters, in their love and admiration for their gifted friend, looked forward always in happy anticipation to the days on which the home would be gladdened by his presence; while their unfailing kindness and delicate attentions appealed with peculiar force to the responsive heart of Jesus, and contributed to a friendship that he cherished as one of the dearest and most comforting of his life.

¶ This peaceful home at Bethany meant to him not only loving hospitality ; not only bodily rest and repose of mind; but, above all else, it meant for him sympathy and appreciation — that heart refreshment for which his sensitive, exalted nature so often thirsted in vain.

¶ Yet the happiness which this taste of home life brought to the weary heart of Jesus was but a rift in the clouds that were growing ever darker and more ominous.

¶ The animosity of the Pharisees and the ecclesiastical officials steadily increased. Every possible effort was used to counteract his influence. It was made a misdemeanor to listen to him. Those who dared to acknowledge him as the Messiah were excommunicated. He was himself excommunicated — branded as a sinner and forbidden to enter the synagogues. The accusation that he was possessed of a devil was again brought forward. His lowly birth, his

humble circumstances, his lack of schooling, his unconventional mode of life — all were set forth as damaging facts.

¶ These malicious efforts were not without their effect. They awakened suspicion and contempt among many of the more strictly orthodox Jews. With the masses, however, his popularity continued to increase; and through the overmastering force of his personality and his surprising knowledge of the Scriptures he succeeded for the time in thwarting every effort of his opponents to involve him.

¶ One day, shortly after his arrival in Jerusalem, as he was seated in the centre of a group of listeners in the Temple, he was called upon by some of the scribes and Pharisees in authority to give his opinion on a judicial question. Dragging forward a young woman, convicted of having broken one of the Ten Commandments, they said to him with feigned humility

and reverence: "Teacher, the law of Moses commands that one guilty of the sin committed by this woman shall be stoned to death. What is your opinion?"

¶ If he answered that the penalty should be enforced it would injure him in the eyes of the people, for the Scriptural law in this particular had long been obsolete, and to revive it now would arouse a storm of public indignation. If, on the other hand, he decided that the woman should be dismissed, he would be charged by the authorities with slighting the law, for it was still binding, even though unobserved.

¶ His enemies thought they had succeeded in placing him in a predicament. They congratulated themselves that they had at last found an opportunity of not only humiliating him before the public, but also of proving him guilty of an offense.

¶ All eyes were turned upon him. What would

he answer? With averted face he stooped and wrote with his finger upon the dust of the floor.

¶ "He is bewildered. He knows not how to reply," were the whispered comments of the scribes; and again they put the question to him, this time more boldly.

¶ Slowly rising and turning his calm, penetrating gaze full upon his opponents, he said: "If there be one among you who is without sin, let him cast the first stone at this woman, as required of the chief witness by the law of Moses."

¶ Rebuked and mortified at his masterful evasion of the snare they had set for him, the scribes and Pharisees knew not what to reply; and, to conceal their confusion, they retired hastily from the court, followed by the wondering crowd, leaving Jesus alone with the woman, whom he dismissed with a few kind words of pity and admonition.

¶ The invariable failure of their attempts to

compromise him served only to irritate his antagonists the more; yet nothing so violently exasperated them as his claims regarding himself. During the first part of his ministry he had been somewhat reticent on this subject, but now he took advantage of every opportunity to boldly set forth the divine character of his personality in his relation to the Father.

¶ The orthodox and prejudiced Jews failed utterly to appreciate the meaning of his spiritual teachings in this respect, and resented his amazing claims with all the venom of their hatred and bigotry, until, finally, there occurred the open rupture that had been so long impending.

¶ It was at the Feast of Dedication, in the month of December. He had been absent from the city for a short time, in the hope of thus allaying the irritation of his enemies, which had at last become so intense that he was in

danger of personal injury at the hands of some of the more fanatical. He had scarcely entered the Temple, however, before he found himself surrounded by a large number of those unfriendly to him. Smarting under their many failures, they were now more determined than ever to effect his downfall.

¶ They at once sought to enter into a discussion with him regarding his alleged claims to the Messiahship. They demanded that he no longer hold them in suspense. Was he the Christ? They insisted on a definite answer.

¶ But he refused to comply with their arrogant demands. He told them that it would be useless to answer them. They had seen his works and had heard his teachings. They needed no other testimony.

¶ "The works I do," he continued, "are inspired of God. In me the Father is revealed; for the Father and I are one."

¶ In an instant his excitable adversaries burst into a cry of rage. "He blasphemes!" they shouted. "He blasphemes! He calls himself God!" and rushing hither and thither in a frenzy of fanaticism they picked up the loose stones that lay scattered about in the vicinity of some recent repairs to one of the Temple walls.

¶ In their fury they would at once have put him to death, but his imperturbable serenity overawed them for the moment. Their violent outburst had not moved him. He attempted no defense, no remonstrance; but calmly facing the crowd of angry and excited men that pressed about him with arms upraised to beat him down with their deadly missiles, he continued to address them; and then, fearlessly and defiantly, repeated his astonishing statement.

¶ It was the finishing stroke. The crowd rushed toward him. The momentary barrier of restraint

was swept away. His friends quickly surrounded him and endeavored to repel the frantic mob. Shouts and imprecations filled the air. "Kill him! Kill him!" rose on all sides. "The blasphemer! Stone him! Kill him!"

¶ But in the tumult and confusion he disappeared, and escaped from the Temple.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IT was now clearly evident that he could no longer remain in Jerusalem. According to the strict teachings of Judaism he was guilty of deliberate blasphemy, and though the offense was not recognized by the civil authorities Jesus knew full well that the fanatical Jews would not hesitate to mete out to him on their own responsibility the penalty prescribed by the law of Moses; that if he again came within their reach they would undoubtedly attempt to stone him.

Accordingly, he fled from the city and from the province, seeking refuge in the neighboring territory of Perea, where, with his ever-faithful apostles, he continued his work. Whatever his trials or adversities, the great purpose of his life was never forgotten.

¶ With his wonted earnestness he proclaimed the Kingdom of God to the people among whom he now came, and was cheered by the success that rewarded his labors. It seemed for the time as though the happy scenes of his early Galilean ministry were about to be repeated. Many joined him as disciples, and large numbers of persons frequently crowded about him, eager to listen to his words of hope and salvation. Even the children flocked to him, seeking his blessing and delighting in his tender and sympathetic love.

¶ In the midst of these gratifying labors he received the distressing news that his dearly loved friend, Lazarus, of Bethany, was dangerously ill. The message was sent to him by the sisters. They did not ask him to come, yet he knew they expected him; that they looked to him, their friend, for comfort and assistance in their affliction.

¶ His first impulse was to hasten to Bethany at once. But should he forego the labors that at this time hourly claimed his attention? Should he leave his work in the midst of its exacting duties and when his guiding presence was most necessary? Should he do this for his friends, his faithful, generous friends of Bethany?

¶ The answer came from the throne of his lofty nature: Yes, he would go to them. And within two days after the receipt of the sisters' message he had made his preparations and announced his intention to the disciples.

¶ Out of fear for the safety of their master the disciples reminded him that the Jews were seeking his life; that he could not return to Judea without incurring the greatest risk; and they urged him to consider the special danger to which he would be exposed should his presence in Bethany become known at Jerusalem.

¶ But he thought not of himself. It mattered

not to him that he was in danger. He owed a duty to his friends; that alone was his guiding impulse. And so, regardless of his disciples' persuasions, he set forth for the village of Bethany. True to their love and devotion, the disciples accompanied him. "If he will go," said they, "let us go also, and die with him."

¶ Reaching his destination in safety, he was greeted with sobs and lamentations by the two sisters, who, learning of his approach, had come out of the village to meet him. He had come too late. Lazarus was dead.

¶ The sisters were inconsolable in their despairing grief. They felt that Lazarus need not have died; that had Jesus been with them their dear brother would have been spared. In sobbing accents they recounted his sickness, and their pathetic longing for the comforter and physician who alone could have healed their troubled hearts.

¶ Overcome with sorrow and moved by the desolation of the heartbroken women, Jesus bowed his head and gave vent to his heart's emotion in silent tears.

¶ Then turning to Mary and Martha he asked them to show him where they had laid his dear friend to rest. Followed by a number of friends and mourners who had come with the sisters from the house, where they had assembled to offer their condolences, Jesus accompanied the two women to the grave. Like most tombs in the limestone regions of Palestine, it was a recess cut in the side of a natural cave, and closed by a large stone.

¶ Arrived at the spot, Jesus asked that the stone be removed. Evidently he had forgotten the length of time the body had lain in the grave, and Martha hurriedly reminded him that nearly four days had passed since Lazarus was buried. But in words pregnant with mysterious import

Jesus gently insisted that the tomb be opened; and without further protest his instructions were obeyed.

¶ The scene was a desert wilderness ; a spot shut out from the sight of human habitation; grim and desolate with the overshadowing spirit of death. Here the little group of mourners now gathered. Standing apart in respectful silence they gazed with compassionate interest upon the friend of the departed Lazarus, as he stood with bowed head before the open door of the sepulchre.

¶ The calm of evening brooded upon the touching scene. The ruffling breeze that stole across the distant fields faded to rest amid the shadows of the garden of death. No sound disturbed the stillness save the murmured weeping of the sisters. The lips of Jesus moved, but in silence. He was praying.

¶ Then, raising his head and gazing into the

"He called aloud, in a voice vibrant with divine power: 'Lazarus! Come forth!'"

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gloomy depths of the sepulchre, he called aloud, in a voice vibrant with divine power: "Lazarus! Come forth!"

¶ Overcome with consternation the group of startled men and women drew back, staring at the open grave in speechless expectancy.

¶ "Lazarus! Come forth!"

¶ The words had scarcely died away when lo! he that was dead appeared at the entrance of the tomb.

¶ The effect of the miracle was overwhelming. The bystanders could not for a moment credit their senses. They stood aghast, motionless, awe-struck.

¶ With the return of their faculties some of them came forward trembling, in obedience to the command of Jesus, to loose the grave-clothes from him who again breathed—who moved—yea, who again spoke to them; spoke to them with the breath of life, with the voice

of flesh and blood — with the familiar voice of their friend, their brother — Lazarus, Lazarus, alive and well!

¶ Others hastened away, overwrought with excitement and eager to spread the marvelous news. Among them were several rabbis, to whom the miracle was a sign of the gravest portent. What could it mean? Was it possible that this Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah? When had such a miracle been known? The authorities at Jerusalem must hear of it at once, and toward the Temple the rabbis bent their steps in feverish haste.

¶ No sooner did the report of the occurrence at Bethany reach the Temple than a council of the chief priests was hurriedly assembled. Instant and decisive action was necessary. The Galilean must be arrested at once! His popularity with the masses would know no bounds as soon as the news of this most astounding

miracle became known. The safety of the nation, the peace of the people, demanded his immediate suppression. There was but one course to pursue — he must be put to death!

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ALL Palestine was aglow with the blush of spring. From field and garden, from orchard and mountain forest rose the soft and perfumed breath of wakening life, while earth and Heaven rang with the music, the hallelujah, of Nature's choristers. The world was astir with hope and with gladness. It was the dawn of the new year; the time of the Passover, the celebration of Israel's deliverance.

¶ Already a large number of pilgrims had reached the Holy City, and companies and caravans from all parts of the country were hourly arriving. On every hand preparations for the great feast were going forward, and the city teemed with busy and joyous life.

¶ Yet the affairs of the coming festival did not

alone claim the attention of the people. A matter of even greater importance than the Passover was before them. A feeling of expectancy, a subdued excitement, pervaded the air. Men gathered together in groups and engaged in animated conversation. A topic of unusual moment was uppermost in the thoughts of every one.

¶ Especially did it engage the attention of the Jewish authorities. To them it was a matter of the most serious consequence. It formed the one subject of discussion among them. Would Jesus attend the feast? they inquired one of another. Would he again dare to defy them? Orders for his arrest had been sent to all parts of the district embraced in the jurisdiction of Jerusalem, and yet it was rumored that he was even now on his way to Jericho, followed by a great multitude. Their fears regarding the effect of his miracle at Bethany had been only too

fully realized. He had eluded them in their attempt to arrest him at the time, and now his name was ringing throughout the country, and the people were ready to acknowledge him as their leader.

¶ The excitement of the citizens and the fears of the officials steadily increased. Jesus, the Galilean, had reached the village of Bethany. The wildest rumors filled the air: He was about to enter the city at the head of an army. Thousands were rallying to his support. He was the Christ, the Nation's Saviour. The Passover was to be glorified by the final and triumphant deliverance of Israel.

¶ Look! Along the highway that swept across the brow of Mt. Olivet and was plainly visible from the Temple porches, came a vast concourse of pilgrims in martial array. An army of men was slowly approaching the city gates.

¶ In the midst of the advancing throng, and

forming its central figure, was a young man riding upon an ass.

¶ No longer was it a matter of doubt or supposition: Jesus of Galilee had returned. He was about to enter the city; not as he had done six months before, at the Feast of Tabernacles, quietly and unobserved, but boldly and triumphantly, as a leader; as a king.

¶ The resurrection of Lazarus had become known to the vast army of pilgrims converging upon Jerusalem from the various towns and districts of Palestine, and had awakened in the people of the provinces their old-time enthusiasm. Large numbers had at once sought him out and accompanied him from Jericho to Bethany. Others, coming from various directions, had halted at the village and joined those already there, waiting for him to set forth for Jerusalem, after resting over the Sabbath at the home of his friends; while hundreds who had

already reached the city, learning of his near approach, had gone out to meet him with joyful acclamations and songs of welcome.

¶ And now, as the multitude of pilgrims drew near to the city and beheld the glittering walls and pillars of the Temple standing in majestic grandeur upon its lofty hill, their hearts overflowed with fervid emotion, and they broke forth into glad shouts and hosannas in honor of him who was leading them to the Holy City. With the natural ability of people of the East to improvise, their acclamations soon took a rhythmical and definite form, and ere long the voices of the entire multitude were joined in a glorious psalm of praise and invocation:

¶ "Give thanks, O Jehovah, to the Son of David! Blessed be he, the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of Jehovah?"

¶ Yea, he was their King! He would restore the power of Israel! As they sang their enthu-

siasm increased. Their voices rose higher and more exultant. In the fervency of their emotions many of them spread their cloaks upon the ground that Jesus might tread upon them, while others strewed the road with blossoms and tender branches cut from the trees along the way.

¶ Onward moved the imposing procession. It crossed the brook at the foot of Olivet, and, mounting the slope that led to the gate of the city, passed on through the streets toward the Temple. It increased in numbers as it went, hundreds hurrying from every quarter to join it and swell the chorus. The shouts rang louder. The enthusiasm and excitement grew more intense every moment. The processionists plucked branches from the palms and olive trees as they passed, and waved them in triumph. The citizens of Jerusalem ran to their doors. What was the meaning of this unusual demonstration? What great personage had arrived?

¶ "Who is it?" they asked with eager curiosity.

¶ "Jesus of Nazareth!" called back the multitude in proud and exultant answer.

¶ Amid this scene of inspiring jubilation Jesus alone remained unmoved. In striking contrast to the joyous faces about him his countenance revealed a heart of tender sadness. Again his fellow-men were hailing him as their King. He did not now attempt to undeceive them. It would be useless. He meekly accepted the royal honors they were bestowing upon him. He *was* their King, their Messiah. Their false conception of his sublime office made him none the less worthy of their homage.

¶ Arrived at the Temple, he dismounted and entered. The excited throng of pilgrims who had accompanied him expected an immediate manifestation of his powers as their deliverer. But after a solemn survey of the scene about him he quietly withdrew. The day was drawing

to a close, and he returned with his disciples to Bethany.

¶ Though the people were sorely disappointed, the excitement and disturbance aroused in every quarter by the day's events were destined to continue; for on each of the following days — Monday and Tuesday — Jesus again appeared in the city.

¶ To his customary fearlessness there was now added a commanding mastership. Without opposition he drove from the Temple the dealers and money-changers whom he again found profaning the Sanctuary. Defying the threats of the authorities and scorning the antagonism of the Jerusalemites, he openly frequented the Temple, and there taught and healed the many who flocked to him; at the same time setting forth more plainly than ever his claims to the Messiahship.

¶ In vain his enemies endeavored to check him.

Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes and priests, uniting in a common cause, assailed him with all the strength of their combined power and influence. In the pomp of official costume and exalted station they set themselves against this simple Galilean, while the multitudes looked on.

¶ They entered into a keen and prolonged controversy with him, putting forward their champions of debate to entangle him in his talk and elicit from him something that would serve to incriminate him before the civil authorities.

¶ But Jesus was far more than a match for them. Hour by hour he unflinchingly met their attack. Alone and unaided he repelled their treacherous assaults. His straightforwardness put their duplicity to shame, and his knowledge and his skill in argument foiled their every attempt to entrap him.

¶ Then suddenly turning upon them, and as-

suming the aggressive, he gave expression with all the force of his sublime eloquence to the pent-up indignation of a righteous heart; exposing their hypocrisy and corruption in words at once so forceful, so incisive, so full of bitter scorn and spirited rebuke, that his proud listeners cringed before him in the consciousness of his overwhelming superiority.

¶ It was the final and decisive breach between him and the representatives of the nation. He had utterly humiliated them and disgraced them before the people. It was intolerable, unbearable; and burning with desire for revenge they resolved that nothing should now interfere with their determination to destroy him.

¶ A council was accordingly held at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. Summary measures must be taken for the arrest of the Galilean. His defiance had already been allowed to go too far. He must be brought before the Roman Gov-

CAIAPHAS

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ernor and charged with some capital offense. The welfare of the nation, the power and dignity of the theocracy, demanded his immediate death.

¶ But even as they talked they were conscious of their impotence. They were powerless to act. It would be suicidal, it would subvert their very object, should they attempt to lay hold of their enemy in the crowded streets or the Temple courts. The excitable provincials would rise in revolt. Yet, where else could they find him? How would it be possible to take him by stealth?

¶ The answer came from a most unexpected source.

¶ One of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot, came to them voluntarily and offered to betray his master. He would let them know when and where he could be found, so that his arrest could be accomplished without interference.

¶ Such base treachery astonished even these unscrupulous men, yet they did not delay in taking advantage of it, and at once paid the man the reward he asked—thirty shekels: the price of a slave.

¶ In common with the rest of the disciples Judas had long been unable to rid himself of the commonly accepted Jewish idea regarding the character of the Messiah. Notwithstanding their master's careful and oft-repeated explanations, these simple-minded men persisted in the belief that the Kingdom of God was in some way a material one, and that upon its establishment they would be rewarded with special honors.

¶ The refusal of Jesus, however, to avail himself of the opportunity offered him upon his entrance into the city on Sunday had finally convinced them of the error of their selfish ideas. But, with the exception of Judas, it brought no change in their love and attach-

ment for the master. Their lives were dedicated to him. They would follow wherever he might lead.

¶ To Judas, however, it was a bitter disappointment. His worldly hopes and ambitions were shattered. He felt that he had been wronged; that he had been deceived. For all these months he had patiently endured the dangers and hardships that had come to Jesus and his disciples, and now he found that he was to have nothing—no substantial remuneration. His sordid nature was filled with resentment, and he forthwith determined to forsake his master and to seek revenge by placing him in the hands of his enemies.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

IT was Thursday night—the night of the Passover supper. The light of the moon rising over the city shone dimly through the window of a small room in a house in Jerusalem where Jesus and eleven of his disciples were gathered together. Judas was not with them. He had withdrawn earlier in the evening, while they were yet eating, for Jesus and his companions had met at this place to celebrate the paschal supper.

¶ The meal having been finished, the remaining disciples now reclined about the table listening to their master. An unexplainable feeling of sadness cast a shadow over the little group. In the dim and flickering light of the festal lamps they gazed in pensive silence upon the face of

Jesus as he sat in their midst and talked to them. There was a melancholy pathos, a strange meaning, in his words to-night which the disciples knew not how to interpret. He spoke as though he were about to leave them; as though they were soon to be separated. They knew not what it meant, yet their hearts were stirred with a vague premonition of impending calamity. Never had he seemed so near, so dear, to them.

¶ The hours passed by, and it was nearly midnight ere Jesus and his disciples sang the concluding hymn of the holy supper. Passing out of the house and turning their steps in the direction of Mount Olivet, Jesus led the way to one of his favorite haunts — a small olive orchard called Gethsemane; a place dear to him as one in which he had ofttimes spent the night in sweet communion with the Father.

¶ Leaving the disciples to themselves, he withdrew to a secluded spot, apart from the sight and

hearing of all save One. And there in the stillness and solitude of the midnight hour he sank upon the ground and buried his face in his hands. The pent-up emotions of a sublime soul overwrought with sorrow broke forth in convulsive anguish. In the agony of a tortured and despairing heart he cried aloud to God. His sufferings were more than he could bear alone.

¶ He knew of the treachery of Judas. He realized what it meant. Even now his enemies were preparing to take him. They would put him to death! The doom that had so long hung over him was about to be fulfilled. But must he die? Must he give up the world, his friends, his work? No, no! life was still so full of promise, so full of wondrous possibilities. He was young—only thirty-three; he had strength and health; his work was scarcely begun. Life was still before him. But, alas! the world had forsaken him! His fellow-men would put him to death! All was

darkness and despair. Oh, for some ray of hope; some word of comfort! Did not the Father hear him? Could it be that He, too, had forsaken Him?

¶ But even as he prayed his voice grew softer. A heavenly radiance overspread his countenance. A wondrous calm possessed his being. The storm had passed; fears and despairing doubts were dispelled. His soul was at peace. The will of God — it was the light, the answering voice, from Heaven.

¶ Scarcely had he risen when the sound of voices and the tramp of feet reached his ears, and a few moments later a body of men and soldiers, carrying lanterns and armed with swords and clubs, came upon him. At their head was Judas. Stepping up to Jesus he saluted him with a kiss. It was a prearranged signal, and the next moment the rough crowd surrounded Jesus, and, binding him with cords, hurried away with him toward the city.

JUDAS

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¶ Awakened from their slumbers by the tumult, the disciples made a hasty attempt to interfere; but perceiving themselves outnumbered they fled in terror and bewilderment, leaving their master to his fate.

¶ Caiaphas, with a number of the chief priests and other dignitaries, was waiting for him in the council hall of his palace. The minds of his judges were already made up. Their verdict was predetermined, but due formality required that there should at least be a semblance of a trial. Accordingly, a number of witnesses were brought forward and examined as to the teachings and claims of the Galilean; but their evidence was weak and contradictory. It proved nothing.

¶ Chagrined and angered at his failure to establish a formal accusation against Jesus, Caiaphas now turned to the prisoner, determined to incriminate him by his own words, and solemnly

commanded him to answer whether he was the Messiah, the Son of God.

¶ Drawing himself up to his full height, and looking his proud persecutor squarely in the face, he replied, with all the solemnity of his eloquent voice, "I am."

¶ Caiaphas had gained his point. With feigned horror he cried out: "Behold, he has spoken blasphemy! What need have we for further testimony?" And forthwith the council convicted him and passed sentence upon him; condemning him to be turned over to the Roman Governor in the morning, to be put to death. His persecutors knew full well that the accusation of blasphemy was one that the civil law of the Romans would not recognize, but it would at least serve as a pretext for bringing him before the Governor.

¶ Retiring from the hall, Caiaphas and his associates left Jesus in the hands of the guards,

who gave vent to their coarse feelings by insulting and abusing their helpless prisoner; spitting upon him, pushing him about from one to another, and, with shouts of brutal laughter, calling upon him to manifest his miraculous powers by naming those who struck him as they held him blindfolded.

¶ The sun had scarcely risen when Caiaphas and his associates hurried their prisoner to the palace of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. Though the hour was early the news of the arrest of Jesus had already spread throughout the city, and as the court of the Governor was at this time of the year held in the open air, on a raised tribunal in front of the palace, the surrounding space was soon filled with a mass of men and women eager to learn the fate of the Galilean.

¶ Caiaphas had hoped that Pilate would accept the finding of the council and carry out its

wishes without question; but the Governor insisted on knowing the charge upon which he was asked to condemn the prisoner to death.

¶ "He calls himself a king?" came the answer. "He would stir the nation to revolt!"

¶ But taking him aside and questioning him, Pilate soon perceived that the accusation was a false one; that Jesus made no pretensions to an earthly throne, and he forthwith acquitted him.

¶ But the Jews would not accept the decision. They insisted that he had excited the people with seditious teachings, and that he should be treated as an enemy of the state.

¶ Fearing to offend the populace, yet realizing that the charges against Jesus were actuated solely by religious hatred, and were not worthy of his official notice, Pilate sought to clear himself of the dilemma by sending the prisoner to Herod Antipas, who was then in Jerusalem, and

who as the Tetrarch of Galilee had authority to pass judgment upon a Galilean. His official residence was not far from the palace, and thither Jesus was taken in rough haste by a guard of soldiers, followed by the clamorous crowd.

¶ But Herod was as loath as Pilate to condemn to death a man in whom he could find no guilt. Nevertheless he treated Jesus with the utmost insolence and contempt, and after vainly endeavoring to elicit some response to his bantering questions he had a gorgeous robe thrown upon the shoulders of Jesus, in mockery of royal distinction, and sent him back with his accusers to the Governor.

¶ It was customary at the Passover to set free some one of the state prisoners, upon the application of the Jews. Pilate now called attention to this custom, hoping that the people would ask for the release of Jesus. But, acting upon the instructions of Caiaphas and the chief priests,

the crowds called for Barabbas, a Jew condemned to death for taking part in a recent insurrection. They did not want Jesus. He must die!

¶ Pilate endeavored to reason with them. They retorted with further accusations against the prisoner. Pilate expostulated. They defied him; they reproached him. He appealed to their sense of justice, their pride, their religion; but his words were drowned in a tumult of raging voices. They would not listen; they would not reason. The Galilean must die! Let his blood be upon them—upon their children; let the consequences be what they might, he must be put to death!

¶ Then out of the noise and confusion rose a cry—a fierce, outleaping cry, born of the demon spirit of the mob—"Crucify him!"

¶ "Yea, crucify him! Crucify him!" The cry was taken up by the multitude. It was shouted;

PONTIUS PILATE

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it was yelled; it was shrieked. It rose to Heaven in frenzied chorus: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

¶ Irresolute, weak and timid, Pilate was overborne by the furious will of the populace. Turning to his guards he commanded that Jesus be scourged—a punishment preliminary to crucifixion.

¶ Binding the prisoner's hands to a post the soldiers smote him upon the bare back with braided cords of leather tipped with sharp-pointed bones and lumps of lead; smote him until he fell bleeding and quivering with unbearable pain. Dragging him into the palace the guards still further abused him with blows and wanton jests; saluting him amid foul and boisterous mirth as "King of the Jews," after placing upon him a scarlet cloak and pressing upon his brow with malicious force a hastily made crown of thorns.

In this guise Pilate again brought him out before the people, vainly hoping that the punishment so unmercifully inflicted upon the prisoner would satisfy their vengeful feelings. Weak and suffering, yet uttering no word of complaint nor of protest, his hands bound before him, and his pale features stained with the marks of blood, Jesus gazed yearningly upon the mass of upturned faces before him. Nowhere was there a pitying smile, a sympathetic look.

His friends had deserted him. Not one had had the courage to come forward in his behalf nor to offer him even the comfort of a friendly presence. Of the thousands who a few days before were greeting him as their king many had renounced their allegiance, out of fear at the news of his arrest; while others, angered at his failure to realize their expectations, had turned against him and joined his enemies in clamoring for his life.

¶ Fury and sullen animosity alone met his gaze as he stood now in pathetic helplessness before the people, mutely appealing to their mercy.

¶ "Crucify him! Crucify him!" That alone was their response; that alone was the answer from the lips of his fellow-men — his own countrymen, his own brotherhood.

¶ His doom was sealed. Mercy, justice, reason were borne down before the storm of fanaticism and hatred. "Crucify him! Away with him! Away with him! Let the sentence of death be executed!"

¶ The morning was now well advanced. The whole city was aroused. Jesus, the Galilean, had been condemned to die.

¶ Surrounded by a military guard Jesus was led through the streets of Jerusalem. A turbulent concourse of men and boys pressed after him with shouts and gesticulations, while from the dense crowds that lined the way on both sides

came the tumult of thousands of excited voices, mingled with the lamentations of women and the derisive laughter of hardened men as they caught sight of the hapless victim.

¶ Across his shoulders were the heavy beams of a cross, and beneath their cruel weight he moved with feeble, faltering steps; his body bent to a stooping posture, and his fastened hands trembling in piteous helplessness. The physical tortures he had endured for the past nine hours had robbed him of all strength. Many of his wounds were still bleeding. Every movement intensified his sufferings. His steps became slower and more feeble. The weight of his burden was crushing him to earth. He could bear it no longer. He could go no farther. With a moan he sank upon the ground, exhausted.

¶ With brutal indifference the guards attempted to drag him on, when a man in the crowd interceded. He was at once seized upon and com-

"He could go no farther. With a moan he sank upon the ground, exhausted."

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pelled to carry the cross in punishment for his sympathy.

¶ Thus relieved, Jesus moved forward with tottering steps. The vulgar rabble hooted and jeered. His sufferings excited the merriment of those about him. They taunted him with mocking epithets, and gave expression to their sentiments in coarse and noisy jests that were shouted back and forth through the surging crowd.

¶ Only here and there a pitying face looked on. Standing apart, broken-hearted and crushed with grief, was the gentle and loving Mary. Her agony of spirit was beyond the relief of tears. In mute despair she held out her arms toward the suffering martyr—her son, her Jesus!

¶ Grouped about her, and endeavoring in vain to comfort the poor mother, were three or four others. Among them was Mary of Magdala, a young woman who had devotedly followed Jesus from Galilee and had remained true to

her revered master in the midst of trials that had driven away even the disciples. Yet of the twelve there was one whose faith and courage had not forsaken him. John, he whom Jesus loved most dearly, was now standing with the little group of sorrowing women, gazing with bleeding heart upon his beloved friend, and yearning to comfort and to aid him in this his awful hour of affliction.

¶ Wearily he climbed the steep road that led to the summit of a hill a short distance beyond the city walls. It was the place of execution. Two criminals had been brought from the palace with him, and they, too, were about to die—to be crucified. No mode of punishment was more cruel, more horrible. With arms outstretched and fastened to the cross by nails driven through the hands, and with feet nailed flat against the upright post, the naked victim was left in agonizing torment to a slow and hideous death.

¶ Several hours had passed. It was now nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. Three crosses, each with its suffering victim, stood upon the brow of the hill. The one in the centre bore above it a derisive inscription:

JESUS OF NAZARETH
The King of the Jews

¶ The scorching sun beat down upon his quivering, unprotected body. Unable to move, unable to relieve for an instant the maddening, intolerable tension, he hung suspended by his outstretched arms; every muscle writhing with agony; every nerve, every fibre of his being, throbbing and pulsing with excruciating torture.

¶ Persons passing by looked up and laughed. For hours the heartless crowds had mocked him and reviled him. Then, tiring of their brutal

sport, they had left him. Other interests drew them elsewhere. The excitement of the morning died away. The incident was forgotten. The people returned to their daily occupations, and the busy life of the world passed on. Jesus, the Galilean, no longer played a part in the drama of human affairs.

¶ He was dying. His weak and tortured frame quivered with the last pangs of agony. He was alone; deserted; forsaken. Alone in the darkness of infinite sorrow; yielding up his life for the sake of an ungrateful and iniquitous world — a sacrifice transcendent, inscrutable. With a great sob his head fell upon his breast.

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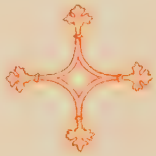
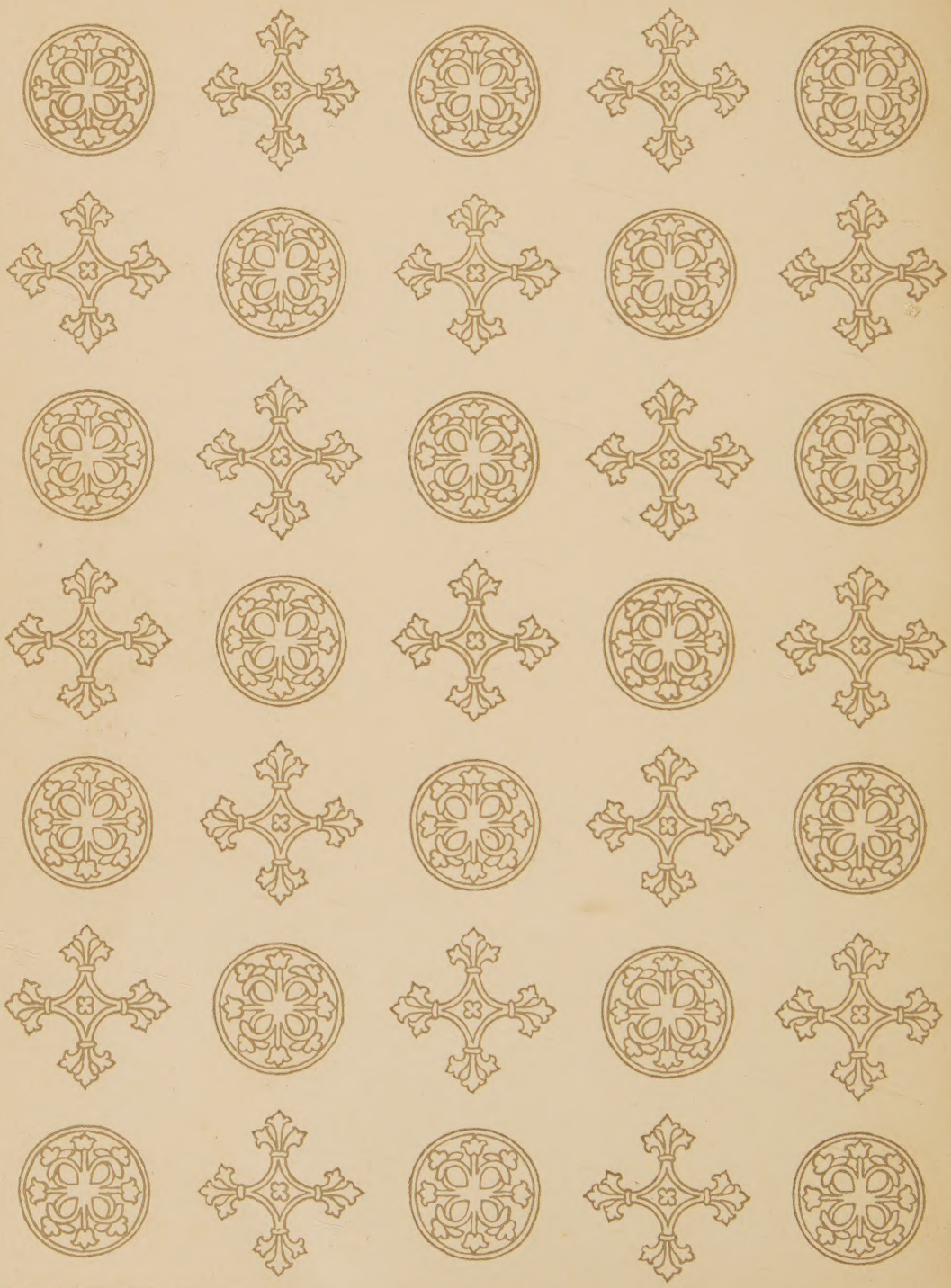
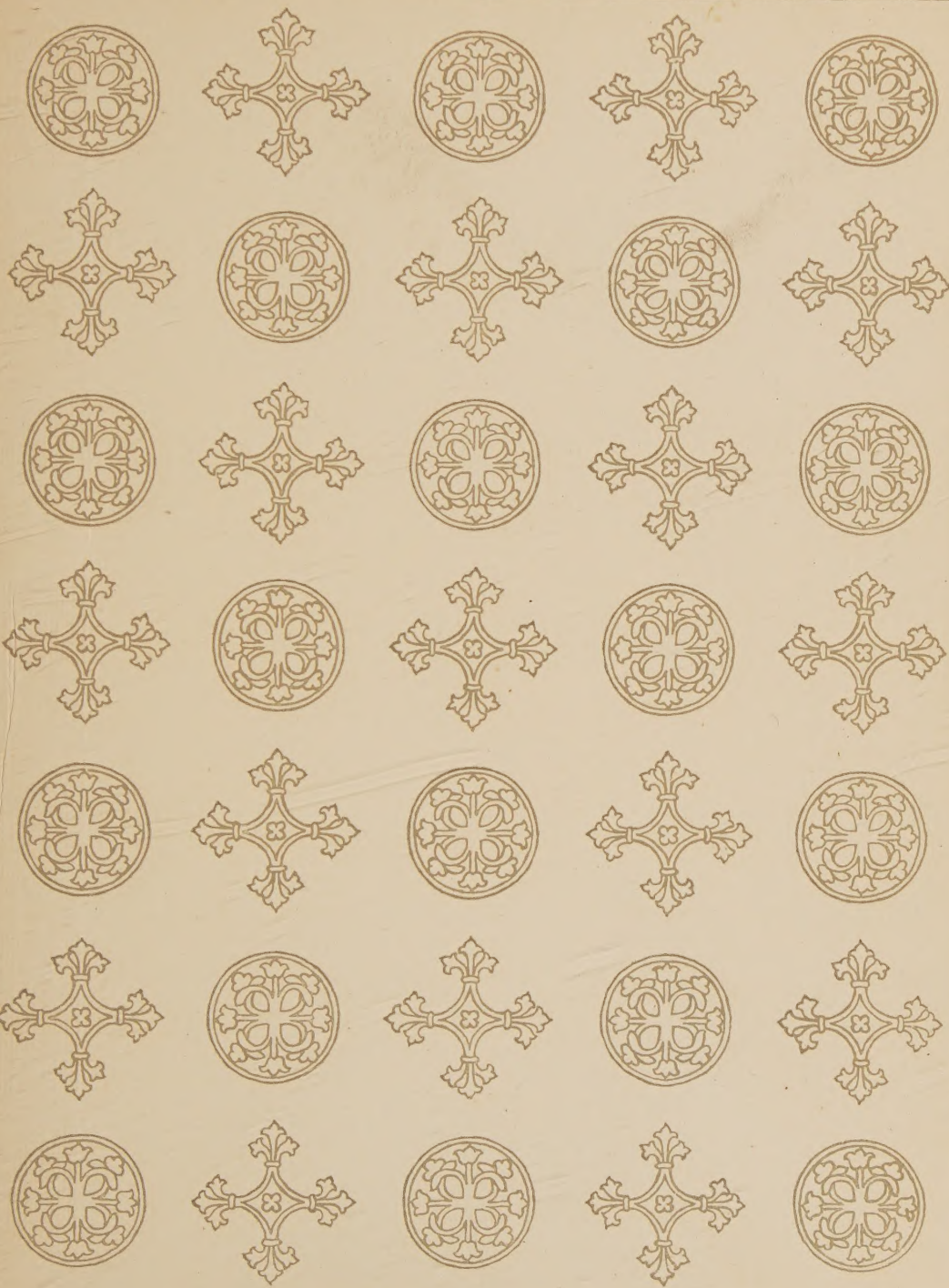
¶ His life's mission was fulfilled.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